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The

Literary

Review

Poetry

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Moshe
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QUARTERLY / ONE DOLLAR / SUMMER 1959

Editorial Notes

Recently we attended several literary functions in New York City, where we heard one per cent wisdom, the rest sheer palaver—the usual batting average of cultural no less than of other conclaves. The human animal, alas, is not always at his noblest in mass affairs. During the pompousities, glowing praise was heaped on New York City as our country's literary capital, which led us to reflect on the name and nature of literary capitals.

Historically, our country has had several literary capitals. The first and, for almost a century, the only one, of course, was Boston, pretty much the Athens of America throughout the whole of the nineteenth century. The headquarters of the Golden Age in American literature was there and some cultural historians argue that it produced our only Golden Age—a form of local pride, we fear, that cannot wholly be proved.

Around 1890 the center of literary gravity shifted to New York City and there it remained for a time. Some Manhattan patriots claim it is still there and has been there the past seventy years, but few knowledgeable persons take the claim seriously. As long ago as 1912, for example—that eventful year marking the founding of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*—Chicago gave birth to a literary life which flourished into the twenties. A city that could boast of figures such as Vachel Lindsay, Carl Sandburg and Edgar Lee Masters; the early Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson and Ben Hecht; Harriet Monroe, Vincent Starrett and Keith Preston, and many others in the galaxy, was surely a literary capital without a peer in the country.

For a brief period in the early twenties, New Orleans nourished a colorful center. That city has a loveliness all its own, but it also has a claim to historical importance. Why have so few academic literary historians not made more of the fact that at that time New Orleans published a fine magazine called *The Double-Dealer* and that it was the home of William Faulkner, the later Sherwood Anderson, and John McClure, Luis Muñoz Marín (Governor of Puerto Rico) and Muna Lee—the latter three, sadly neglected as writers?

In the late twenties literary life was revived in New York, but in all truth the City was less a capital than an emporium. The leading writers lived far away—Frost in New England, Hemingway in Europe, Faulkner in Mississippi, Cabell in Virginia, Sandburg in the Midwest, Steinbeck in California, O'Neill in Massachusetts or on an island off Georgia.

Where is our literary capital today—in New York? We doubt it. How many writers live there and get their inspiration there? Faulkner is still in Mississippi. Hemingway is in Cuba. Even John O'Hara, several light years removed from the writers we hold high, has lived mainly in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and other authors topping the best sellers lists live and work hundreds of miles from Madison Avenue. And relatively few of the contributors to *The Literary Review* write in the garrets or towers of Manhattan.

We have a fondness for New York City—old and new—particularly its fish markets, ferry boats and off-Broadway theater, but we cannot persuade ourselves that it is a literary capital in the sense

(continue inside back cover)

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Contributors

ETHAN AYER collaborated with Alec Wilder in writing the musical based on *The Importance of Being Ernest*, produced last year on Broadway. His first published short story, "The Unicorn," appeared in this *Review*.

GENE BARO, a member of Bennington College's English faculty, contributes verse and prose to periodicals here and abroad. A collection of his poems, *Northwind*, is soon to be published by Scribner's.

LORNA BEERS, Summit, New Jersey, has published five novels, one of which, *The Mad Stone*, received an Avery Hopwood award.

HENRY BIRNBAUM, Wheaton, Maryland, has published in many of the literary quarterlies.

CHARLES BLACK, a native Texan now living in New Haven, has published verse widely the past two years.

CHARLES BOEWE, a member of the English faculty of the University of Pennsylvania, is the book review editor of *American Quarterly*.

HELEN CARLSON teaches English at Pennsylvania State University.

MILDRED COUSINS, Rochester, New York, has published widely.

WILLIS EBERMAN's poems have appeared in magazines in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Belgium, Ceylon . . .

ZOLTAN L. FARKAS, Clifton, New Jersey, is currently in the U.S. Army. The József translations are his first publication.

FREDERICK R. KARL, who teaches English at The City College of New York, has published fiction and non-fiction in several quarterlies. We are

The Literary Review

Editors

Clarence R. Decker
Charles Angoff

Advisory Editors

Peter Sammartino
Lloyd Haberly
Edith Heal

Secretary

Ruth Waldmann

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happy to publish his Conrad article on the hundredth anniversary of the novelist's birth.

KONSTANTINOS LARDOS, Pittsburgh, spent a year on the island of Icaria, where his parents were born. His poems have appeared widely.

JACK LINDEMAN, Philadelphia, is the Editor of *Whetstone*, a literary quarterly. He has published poems, articles, and letters in *Poetry* (Chicago), *Harper's Bazaar*, *Saturday Review*, *New Republic* . . .

JOHN N. MORRIS, a part-time instructor at Columbia, has published poems in the *New Yorker*, *Poetry* (Chicago), and other magazines.

KARL PATTEN, a New Englander educated at Williams College and Boston University, now teaches at Bucknell University.

ROBERT PAYNE spent last Summer in Greece and the story, "The Red Rock," is part of a projected series of stories on Socrates. His last published work is *The Canal Builders* (1958).

ERROL PRITCHARD is an editor of the newly-founded magazine, *Poetry Northwest*, Seattle.

MARK SCHORER, Professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley, writes fiction and criticism. This year, as a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study at Stanford, he hopes to complete the biography of Sinclair Lewis at which he has been working since 1952.

MOSHE SHAMIR, born in 1921 and educated in what is today Israel, is a distinguished novelist, short story writer, and playwright. His novel, *He Who Went Into the Fields*, was turned into a play which won the Ussishkin Prize in 1948. His most recent novel is *King of Flesh and*

Blood, considered by many the best historical novel yet produced in Israel. His plays are performed in all of Israel's major theatres.

KAYE STARBIRD, Shelbourne, Vermont, writes both serious poetry and light verse.

MARK SUFRIN, free lance writer, wrote and co-directed the script for the film, *On the Bowery*, prize winner of the Venice Festival and British Film Academy.

BENJAMIN TAMMUZ, prominent writer of the younger Israeli school, is distinguished in his stories by his aesthetic approach and sense of atmosphere and color. He is art critic of *Haaretz* and editor of *Haaretz Shelanu*, children's newspaper.

CHAO TZE-CHIANG is assistant professor of Chinese Language and Literature at The American Academy of Asian Studies, San Francisco.

JOSEPH TUSIANI, who won England's Greenwood Prize for poetry in 1956, is also known for his writings in Italian and Latin.

ISABEL WILLIAMS VERRY teaches English in the Abington, Pennsylvania, High School.

D. J. VINCENT, Manhattan, Kansas, formerly was co-publisher of a small Kansas weekly newspaper.

CHAD WALSH, one of the founders and editors of *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, has published two volumes of poetry, *The Factual Dark* and *Eden Two-Way*. A Fulbright professor (American literature) in Finland last year, he is currently a visiting professor of English at Wellesley College.

RICHARD F. WEISENSEEL, a native New Yorker now living in Chicago, is at work on a novella (*The Tritons*).

THE LITERARY REVIEW

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The Skyscrapers

ETHAN AYER

They are only towers—like any other towers
Made for escape and ambuscade and siege.
There is the solar with its couch and chair,
There is the courtyard with its struggling flowers,
And there is the writing-table of the liege
Lord of the ramparts of the upper air.

In the penthouse, as the street, the king, the serf
Of this modern plaza rule and pay the tithe.
There is no more mercy there for mercy's sake
Than there ever was, nor cleanliness; the scurf
Of unnumbered passages is blown, and lithe
In the banquets of the scourge, the bodies break.

Where is the bridge across the moat to press
Into the open country of the fen?
We have a sunken courtyard, so did they;
We have a ramp across it, they no less.
The country is the country, but by then
The castle of the city fades away.

The tyranny is a thousand times increased,
The donjons grown, the penalties refined
From pits of blackness into peaks of glass.
The music from the towers has not ceased,
But only multiplied in sum and kind;
The towers are only towers; the brass is brass.

The Adobe Ruins at Casa Grande

MARK SUFRIN

WALKING through the bus station, he looked like any Indian in a small southwestern town. His face was broad and plump and had the look of a shiny brown melon. But the cheeks and the ridges around his bloodshot eyes were puffy, and the skin, in bright light, was mottled. He wore brown pants, a cloth windbreaker over a nylon sport shirt, and high black shoes. A necktie, knotted loosely, flapped out of his cheap jacket. His thick black hair hung out from under a felt hat, but in one hand he held a black Stetson with a high uncreased crown; in the other, he carried a small zippered canvas bag.

None of the stragglers on either side of the long benches or standing in small groups noticed him. He walked to the restaurant counter, ordered coffee, and placed the Stetson on the seat next to him and the bag on the floor. The thin waitress took his order without her customary parched smile, and almost dumped the coffee in his lap when she served it. He sat motionless, staring, then tried to pick up the cup, but his hand shook and the rattling brought an annoyed look from her. She looked over to where the station-manager was talking to the Mexican porter and tried to catch his attention. The Indian looked at her and his mouth eased into a grin. She looked back at him and tried to show her disgust; but he ignored it and said in a thick voice, "It's good to be home again . . . sure is." *One of those Pima from over to Bapchule, she thought.* She started to say something but remembered the night when those three bucks from the Apache reservation at San Carlos had almost wrecked the place when someone called one of them Chief. The State Police sent them back without a charge, but the damage amounted to over a hundred dollars and they hadn't shown in town since. She wondered why the hell they had such a chip all the time. The husky Indian was still having difficulty drinking the coffee and she wondered where he got boozed up like that. *No one in his right*

mind would let an Indian get blind like that.

He was seized with a violent shaking and the coffee spilled over the counter. She made a face and he bent his head and mumbled an apology. When she started to wipe the mess, he started to apologize again, his breath oozing whiskey. Her hand moved slowly to her nose and she said sharply, "All right, I know it was an accident. Look, it's on the house, O.K.? Goodby . . . huh?" He thanked her as he brushed the Stetson, but threw a quarter on the counter anyhow, walked unsteadily to the ticket window and asked when the next bus left for Bapchule. The waitress looked at him, wondering what he would try before he left, and where he had come from: but a bus arrived from Barstow and a group of people piled to the counter.

The Indian bought a ticket and walked into the men's room. The bus driver entered right in back of him, nodded, and remarked that the goddamned desert was as cold as a witch's you-know-what. The Indian grinned; when the hell did he hear that for the first time? At Pendleton—the guy they called Bluebeard. He remembered how he went around crowing the expression every hour or so that day until the guys gave him some good-natured Marine lumps. A few passengers entered and eyed him with curiosity. He walked out, sat on a bench and lit a cigarette. The sweet desert air filtered into the station and he thought of the night when Pache, his brother's friend, had brought them the first pack of tailor-mades—Wings—from the commissary at Sacaton. When he heard the passengers called back to the bus, he picked up the bag, waited until the driver gunned the motor, then walked back into the rest room. He was alone now and began to move swiftly. He went into one of the stalls and latched the door closed behind him. He dug feverishly into the bag and pulled out a bottle of whiskey; his hands began to shake again, but he managed long gulping swallows. In a few seconds his dark face flushed and the dull eyes began to shine. The door of the outer room swung open: he looked down at the space between the door of the stall and the floor and saw a pair of feet standing just outside. He jumped on a toilet seat and hunched over but the man outside started a loud, insistent knocking on the door, shouting, "Now—come on out now!"

What's all this? Come on out now!" He jammed the bottle he was holding and another he dug from the bag into his belt, zipped the windbreaker to his neck and lifted the latch. As he did so, the door swung back, grazing his face. It was the manager.

Still holding on to the Stetson and the bag, the Indian lifted his arms in supplication, and in a weasling voice asked, "What's all the noise for, Mister? Can't a guy take a —"

"Never mind the smart-alec talk," shouted the manager. "What've you got there?"

"That, my friend," replied the Indian, suddenly dropping the compliant tone, "is none of your goddamned business. It's my stuff."

"Listen, boy," the manager was trying to control himself, "I don't want any trouble—for you or myself—but you can smell your breath a mile away, and I don't want trouble here like I had with those kids from San Carlos. It cost me over a hundred bucks . . . damned police didn't do a thing to them."

"What you want 'em to do, bust our heads? That's all your kind knows."

"Now, look—I've tried to be decent about this, but I can see it just don't pay. You know goddamned well what I mean." The color in the manager's face mounted. "Just give me what you have in the bag and we'll forget about everything."

"I told you this is my bag," the Indian said in a flat voice, his big head lurching close to the manager's face, "and I paid for everything in it. You want to search it so damned bad, call a cop. What the hell do you think I am, some old man from up in the hills?"

The manager grabbed for the bag. "I don't have to take any guff, least of all your kind." He tried to yank it from the Indian's hand: "Hand it over or I will call the sheriff."

"Ask for it like a man and you can have it," the Indian said. "I don't want no trouble . . . just want to go home." He handed the bag to the manager who smacked his hand against it hard on either side. He zipped it open and pulled out a large package tied with cord, some underclothes, and a toilet-kit, and threw it all to the floor. When he emptied the bag, he threw it into a corner and started out of the room.

The Indian suddenly began to blubber. "What the hell business

is it of yours? Who the hell was I hurting? I wasn't making no trouble, was I—and goddammit there ain't no bottle and even if—aw hell!—leave off!" He crammed his belongings back into the bag and walked past the manager into the waiting room, shouting over his shoulder, "The hell with your lousy busses—I'll walk it home. Take your busses and shove 'em!" As he walked toward the door leading to the street, he saw the waitress and a tall man in a vague sort of uniform standing together. She pointed at him and the man smiled and approached:

"Hello, Johnny," he said, and stretched his hand toward the Indian who scowled: *some lousy Jap trick*. And he stood a few feet from the man, waiting, his body tensed; but he remembered to bend forward a little from the waist to conceal the bottles. The man smiled and said, "I'm sorry—let me introduce myself; I'm Sheriff Hillibrew." He motioned to the waitress, "Miss, here, seems to be some kind of worried." The Indian remained silent for a few moments, then said softly, "No trouble. I just want to get home . . . how come you know my name?"

"I know who you are, Johnny," replied the Sheriff, "pity these people don't. Priest in Chicago wired some of us here you was comin' and to keep an eye open. If you say there wasn't no trouble, that's good enough for me." He took the Indian gently by the arm. "Want a lift? Things are pretty quiet tonight and I could take you almost all the way to Bapchule."

"No thanks, Sheriff. I think I'll make it alone . . . got a lot to think about."

"Suit yourself, son, but let me take you to the edge of town. Give you a start—besides there's too many damned nosey people here —"

The Indian smiled. "Good deal." He started out the door, then stopped as though he suddenly remembered something. "Will you wait just a few minutes while I do something?" He walked back into the men's room and threw the gray hat and jacket into the trashcan. He placed the Stetson low on his forehead, centering it, and ran his hands along the brim carefully. After he had reached into the bag for the package, untied it, and threw the cord back inside, he placed the bottles in the bag, ripped the necktie off, threw

it into the can and knotted a bright yellow neckerchief below his short collar. His shoulders flexed against the coarse newness of the Levi jacket, and as the last step in the transformation, he replaced the shoes with black-and-white boots, tucked the pants inside the boot-tops and walked out.

"Now I feel better," he said.

"Look better, too, son. Never'd know you was away now, would you?" bantered the Sheriff and then told him to sit in the car outside and he'd be there in a few minutes. The Indian left without looking back as Hillibrew approached the manager and waitress.

"Now what was all this fuss about?" he asked impatiently.

"Hell, Sheriff," replied the manager, "I followed him into the can 'cause he stank from booze and Virginia, here, said he was getting fresh. I was afraid I was gonna have the same trouble like a few months back with those Apache bucks." He hesitated: "Hell, you know what devil they got when they pour a few down."

"Listen," said the Sheriff, "that one there had all the fightin' and all the trouble he'll ever need." He turned, then looked back at the manager. "And just what were you fixin' to do if you found some whiskey on him?" he asked mischievously.

"That one? Nothing—from the size of him. Guess I just would've called you like I did and you'd baby him like you're doing. I've seen a lot of them, but that one had a real mean look in his eye."

The Sheriff made a wry face. Just before he went out the door, he looked straight and hard at the manager. "You know—I'm not gonna tell you who that poor bastard is; but when you find out, you're gonna be awful ashamed of yourself." He looked at the waitress. "And you, too, Miss." He hitched up his pants as he walked out, then stopped again. "One more thing—for the future. These Pima was always great drinkers—even when they was helpin' white folks settle this country. If you wasn't so new here, you'd knowed it—and you'd have tasted their Tiswin; old boys used to make it out of cactus fruit—still do for all I know." He touched his fingertip to his hatbrim and said goodnight.

When he came out to the car, the Indian didn't look at him.

They rode a few blocks before either spoke. "How do you feel, son?" The man's voice was calm and strong.

"O.K., Sheriff, O.K. They fixed me up pretty good in Chicago. I think I'll make it this time."

"I'm sure you will, Johnny. We're all pullin' for you—all your people and all the folks around here that're so proud of you."

"Not much to be proud of these days, huh?"

"Aw hell, boy! Everybody gets his tracks switched once in a while. Don't worry about it. And don't blame them back there. They had a little trouble a while ago and I guess they was just a little scared. When I told the man who you was, why he was just so sorry and he asked me to give you his apology —"

"Hell! I don't blame them and I don't want to trade in on anything. That's what seemed to start the whole goddamned mess with me. I just don't want to be anything extra or anything I'm not. I'm just Johnny Kaema—period. That should be good enough for anybody." He touched the man's arm. "Here, this is O.K.; I'll leg it from here."

"Sure you don't want me to take you all the way? It's a bitch of a cold night and it'll take you at least 'til sometime tomorrow to make it."

"No—I'm sure. Like I told you, I got a lot to think about." The older man sensed his impatience, and swung the car over to the side of the road. Before it had rolled to a dead-stop, the Indian jumped out. He slammed the door shut and waved to the Sheriff as he started down the road. Hillibrew returned the wave, shouting, "Good luck!" and watched the lonely figure, growing smaller, until it merged with the night beyond the scan of the headlights. He made a fast U-turn, the tail light receding into the dark streets.

He walked for an hour until his legs grew heavy and the stitch in his side forced him to sit down along the edge of the road. He lit a cigarette, flipped it away after a few puffs, and reached into the bag for one of the bottles. *You're not the man you used to be, Johnny, he thought—but who the hell is?* The smell of the mesquite and Ocatilla filled his nostrils and for a few minutes he lay on his back looking up at the immense sky and thought of his childhood. He felt tired; his eyes closed shut and he slept. The harsh wail of

an engine whistle pulled him awake and he jumped unsteadily to his feet, startled and shaking the sleep from his eyes. He smiled to himself, goddamned good luck—goddamned good old Southern P. Turning off the highway, he started running across the desert, figuring while he ran how much angle he needed to catch the train. He felt happy and in luck because it sounded slow like a freight, and he knew it ran along the southern end of the reservation near his home. Stumbling into a sharp Cholla cactus, he went down hard on one knee, caught by the needly scales. With an instinctive fear, he edged away from the plant and tried to rip his pants loose, keeping the sharp spines from his skin. But his hands trembled and he tore away frantically, afraid he would miss the train and have to spend the night out on the desert, alone. He remembered the same kind of frenzied dashes years before, weighed down with a pack, carbine, and mortar tube; the same feeling of great space and being alone, even with all the running figures, close, cursing, the extension between them seemingly vast, but only the measure of their fear. The sweat ran over his thick flesh and he played a game to make sense of the long, agonizing run. He called out their names, his voice catching with the exertion of carrying the bag and his big body all that distance. *Hey, Bluebeard, Remer—this way—Snits, Goetke—you jerks—C'mon—Injin Joe'll show you the way!* His breath was coming in spasms and sharp pains strapped his chest when he saw the white beam of the engine in the distance to the left, lighting up a half-mile of desert. He lay down a few feet from the tracks, hiding behind a shrub, and watched while the lights played on the scarlet tips of the Ocatilla bushes a few feet away. Instinctively, he pressed his body flat into the earth: Goddamned good luck—a freight!

The headlamp, closing in, blinded him for an instant and he ducked his head low: *lousy Jap artillery!* The beam swung past and he waited a split-second before he lifted his head and saw the red-orange firebox like a vision of one of his ancestor's campfires on the desert, fading away, moving off into the Sierra Estrella mountains. When they had the big councils before they fought the Apache, he thought. Running alongside the train, he swung aboard the iron ladder, crouching low to avoid the brakeman. He climbed

and crossed two cars, crawling across the roof of the slow-moving train on his hands and knees. He climbed down a ladder slippery with oil and went sprawling on to the hard iron bottom of an empty gondola. His right knee began to stiffen and he lay in a corner, pillowing his head with the bag and slept, despite the pain. A shifting of rhythm in the steady, slow rocking awakened him and he peered over the top of the car: the train had stopped outside of Maricopa to take on water. He looked at his watch but it was shattered in the fall and there was no way he could gauge the time. He didn't know how long he'd been asleep, but he knew the location of the town and realized it would be hours before they reached the reservation. He could see lights from the town in the distance, and thought he would get a room and some more to drink; but he knew if he hit a bar he was good for another few weeks and the few weeks would stretch—they always did. He thought of his family and the wrenching shame made his resolution stronger. It didn't help when he vomited; his head throbbed and he lay down again, shivering in the crackling night. *I'll never make it back this way—with this knee . . . freeze to death.* Then he remembered that the railroad went past the Casa Grande ruins. *Hole up there—build a fire—get a ride out from the Park people in the morning.* The train labored up slowly, the wheels slipping. He heard a voice from the engine coming fitfully through the night, shouting down to someone, then the sound of running feet crunching on the gravel along the length of the train making a sharp *rat-at-tat-tat* with a club on the side of the cars. When it struck the cast-iron gondola, the noise beat with the rumbling immediacy of a barrage and he clapped both hands to his ears. The sound faded and merged with the angry pulsing from the wheels as the train gathered speed. He looked up and the gigantic snout of the water-tower, silhouetted against the cold sky, zoomed overhead.

Afraid to miss the ruins, he rode the rest of the way leaning over the slanted side of the car. When the lights of Casa Grande were still a faint glow in the distance, he bent low. The train went right through and when the town was about a mile back, he jumped and the pain in his knee made him feel nauseous. He knew the ruins were off to the southeast somewhere and he started walking,

limping badly. He emptied one bottle and threw it away, and pulled the other from the bag. *By Christ! This is the last one!* He thought that he would throw it away, but each time he lifted his arm, he began to shake and something restrained him. He pulled short drinks every few minutes and after a time he grew dizzy. Tears came to his eyes and he sat down feeling sick and alone in the desert. *Ten years ago you could have picked your way through here like it was the Loop in Chi—ten years ago . . .* images passed before his eyes like slow-moving, mute underwater swimmers seen through a pane of frosted glass. He picked himself up and when he had walked only a few yards saw the Great House, with its large protective shed, looming high above him. The adobe house, itself, was jagged where the mud had crumbled over the centuries. In the undetailed outline, it looked massive. *Like a castle . . .* he dimly remembered the stories of the old men—the *Hohokam* and the *Salado*—my people—all the way back. The rush of feeling that he was among his own again made him feel better and he knew that everything would be all right. In the morning, he would get a ride home and surprise his father and brothers, and maybe at night they would play a little poker and sit around and tell stories again. He passed inside the great wall surrounding the house and went through the small door, lighting a match. After walking through two of the rooms, he saw a corner where an overhanging shelf partitioned off the feeling of a cold absence of life and he decided to bed down there. The knee still pained, but he stretchd his tubby body full-length and tried to sleep. The throbbing leg made him empty the bottle quicker than he wanted to and he flung it, with an Indian curse, crashing against the wall. The noise made him jump and he thought it was strange that he would curse in Pima. He lay on the cold earth floor and listened to the wind, the night sounds, and, as he listened, they faded away and other sounds and voices spoke to him and they, too, faded away. Hunching in the corner, he tried to escape under the ambit of the shelf overhead and his body started to shake with great heaving pulls. *The spattering rain of black, gritty sand whenever a mortar shell burst. The blood running after the darting azimuth of the machine-gun traversed down the beach. So many nice guys. They must have thought he bugged out. The*

lifeless bodies straining forward in attack. Where the hell were they being taken? Stumbling ahead, carrying the mortar tube . . . useless . . . the other guys with the base-plate lying in awkward heaps. So many good guys and he left them there. The tube, digging itself into the filthy sand, scorching his hands as he fired in high-arcng tracings toward the unseen enemy on the hilltop. A cabal of young death . . . his voice screamed out a release—I DIDN'T BUG OUT THEY MADE ME—THEY TOOK ME BACK—I KNEW I WAS NO GODAMNED HERO!

Haze was settling over the city when a patrol wagon turned into West Madison and stopped in front of one of the cheap hotels that lined the street. Four policemen disappeared inside and emerged herding a group of thick-faced derelicts into the wagon. The sergeant pointed to a figure lying half-hidden in an alley:

"Take that creep along, too."

A patrolman jostled the sleeping figure to his feet and pushed him over to the sergeant. "Well, I'll be goddamned—an Indian—don't see much of these birds around here." He talked to the shoeless man goodnaturedly, "A little far off the reservation, ain't you? All right, Tonto, get up in there." He helped the Indian up the steps into the wagon where he sat on the floor in the mixed smell of creosote, alcohol, and blotched, grimy clothes. He caught the smell of the disinfectant and the familiar odor made him feel uneasy. *After the Pima warrior killed an Apache, he was unclean. For sixteen days he would bathe in the Gila river, caking himself with the sticky substance from the creosote bush. The old men told him this.* At the station-house, they were lined up before the desk sergeant and asked for identification. The babbling Indian was taken to a chair and one of the officers searched his pockets for identification. He pulled out a greasy wallet, looked at some of the cards and papers and whistled softly in surprise. He showed them to the sergeant who looked at the incoherent wreck. "Cheeerrrist!" he said, "this is one for the books."

A few days later, the Indian was visited in the Alcoholic Ward of the city hospital by reporters, a social worker, a police captain, and a young priest. He had been sobered by withdrawal and the

strain seemed to bleach his face. The visitors told him that they knew all about his war record, the famous picture, and the trouble he had been having since: the dozens of arrests for vagrancy and drunkenness in ten years, the aimless jobs—but no one had anything against him and they wanted to help. *You see, even the Captain here, and the newspapers are interested in your case.* He tried to tell them that was half his trouble; nobody would leave him alone to be himself or let him do what he wanted to do. They kept shoving drinks and jobs in front of him as soon as they found out he had been in the famous photograph; and he couldn't hold the jobs—too restless—and he just couldn't seem to refuse the drinks. That lousy picture. It was a jinx. Three of the guys were knocked off right after—he knew he was no goddamned hero—there were lots of good guys he left back on the Island who had done more. It was just dumb luck that he was there when that runty little photographer came around; and nobody but the other guys they brought back to the States with him got anything out of the lousy war. *Sometimes I feel like I was glad to get out of there and left them to die while I was living high. I got so sick of hearing about that goddamned flag-raising. I just felt all the time like I was gonna crack up. You know, like I felt guilty.* He said it imploringly as his eyes filled with tears and they left him alone.

After three weeks, he agreed to take a small stake that a newspaper had collected from its readers and go home; but he told them he didn't like the reservation: there shouldn't be special places for people to live. The priest saw him off at the train taking him to Phoenix and gave him his blessing. As the train pulled out of the station into the maze of rails in the yard, the Indian looked back, waved, and smiled at the priest. *This time, for sure. This time I'm gonna make it home, for sure.* In Phoenix, he bought a pair of boots, a Levi jacket, a black Stetson, and a yellow neckerchief and crammed the package into the bag he bought in Chicago. He checked his hat and bag at the bus station and walked the streets, fingering the crisp bills in his pocket. Someone on the train told him, innocently, that it was legal now for an Indian to buy a drink. Thinking about it, what it would feel like getting a drink in his own state, like any man, without sneaking, he walked into a bar.

Self-consciously, he ordered two shots, but made himself stop with that. He lit a cigar and walked out into the hot afternoon sun, his flabby body feeling easy and relaxed, like when he felt tired and happy after the pounding football games with the high-school kids from around the reservation. He passed a liquor store and stopped a few feet beyond the window, fighting with himself. The display caught his eye and he edged slowly back to examine it. There was only a very short hesitation. He rationalized that he'd buy two bottles, one a present for his father and brothers, just for a homecoming drink; the other would be to keep around the house like the A.A. people in Chicago told him. He had an hour before the bus left for Gila City where he would pick up the reservation bus, and he thought he'd go to the station and wait. When he had walked only a few blocks, he began to feel restless, and thought maybe he wanted a woman. Better not to fool around in this town, he thought. *When I get back to Gila City—over on Hay Street.* He passed a small park, sat down on a bench and tore open the package: *just one for the road.*

He tried to shake his mind free, but it was no use. The gallery of faces flocked before his eyes and he became hysterical. His voice screamed out a protest, but it seemed to come from someone else's throat and he tried to throttle the cry with his big hands; then he slumped to the floor, almost senseless. He lay that way for more than an hour, sobbing, his body shaking with great convulsions. Suddenly, he stood up and began to move with a fast, snaky efficiency. He opened his belt, pulled it away from around his waist and laid it on the shelf, his hand searched in the bag for the piece of cord that had been tied around the package of clothes. It cut into his palms as he stretched it, and he thought it would be good enough. He looped the neckerchief into a noose, placed it around his neck, and after pulling it tight twice, he tied the cord to the loose end with a square-knot. Then, all the while talking in a loud, incoherent voice, he climbed on the shelf and ran his hand over the surface. With a cry of delight, he found what he was looking for: a piece of strong, rough adobe that jutted up from the shelf. Painfully bending the injured leg back, he hunched double, his

head almost to his knees, and with a tremendous, agonizing exertion, managed to throw the belt under his legs and over his head. It was the way the Pima buried their dead in the old days; he would return to what he had been born. When he had managed to buckle the belt, he reached back for the small loop of cord and edged it toward the projection. The black chamber was cold, but the sweat poured from his face and the unfamiliar muscular effort made him dizzy; that, and the pain. His shadowy body was a ball of agony as he lifted the loop slowly, inch-by-inch. With a muffled, choking cry, he thrust it over the mud spike and rolled off the shelf. The yellow neckerchief pulled tight and the cord held just long enough. The life was being drawn from him and he struggled to slip loose and shout, but his vocal chords closed with the fracturing strain. His eyes bulged a little, closed for a moment, then opened again, staring like two large gelatin bubbles. The cord tore away under his big body and he went tumbling to the earth floor and lay in a grotesque, lifeless heap as the desert wind seeped through and blew about him in a low, uncontrolled dirge.

Cherry Blossoms

CHAO TZE-CHIANG

Cherry blossoms
Transplanted in Brooklyn
Dance like a Chinese beauty
Donning her pink gown.
Caressed by breezes
Petals scatter.
A wanderer mourns
In his dust-laden heart.

The Red Rock

ROBERT PAYNE

CHAIRÉ!" the boy said, and Socrates turned to greet him with a smile, but we caught only a glimpse of a dark face and a slender body which moved with inexpressible grace under the short chiton. We were walking under the plane trees on the banks of the Ilysus, and Socrates had been discussing the nature of God, but now the words failed him and he looked back in the dusk hoping to see the boy again; but the boy had disappeared, and I remembered only that his hair was yellow but dark at the roots, and that something flowed under the dust of the boy's face in a cold stream of delight. I told Socrates this, and he clapped his hands and said: "O Glaucon, is beauty so permanent that it leaves a trace on the air?" and he smiled, and once more he attempted to pursue the broken discourse on the nature of God.

There were four of us, Socrates, Eryximachus, Plato and myself. We had spent the day in the gymnasium, and now in the cool of evening we walked along those pathways where Socrates so often walked, leaning on his staff, for he was already old and his beard was snow-white; yet his body was strong, and he would let the wind blow against his stained robe as he walked swiftly along the path, too swiftly perhaps, for we could rarely hear what he was saying. It was when he paused and gazed at the quiet-flowing stream that we understood him better, and sometimes he would gaze for many minutes, talking all the while, and sometimes he would say nothing. But this evening he was very talkative, and according to his custom he would address now Plato, now Eryximachus and now myself. It was my turn to be the recipient of his confidences, and I waited impatiently for the moment when he would address me. At last he said: "And surely it is true, O Glaucon, that God is not an old man but a young boy. Perhaps such a boy as we have just seen, a boy who is insolent in his youth for he pays no attention to old men, and surely it is wrong that we should depict God as Zeus, as we

do at Olympia painting him in gold and placing a thunderbolt in his hand, for the old have no power over the young." I laughed and said: "Truly, Socrates, the old have great power over the young, and you yourself are the greatest exponent of that power, for how often have the young not bowed to your power?" "And would you therefore," he said, "continue to depict God as an old man, especially when the Zeus at Olympia bears such a remarkable resemblance to me? For I assure you, Glaucon, that I am powerless to rule men's hearts as much as a young man may rule the hearts of an old, or even as much as a young woman may rule a young man," and he smiled again, and I knew he was talking of Cleo, the new mistress I had bought from Xenophon.

It was one of those days in summer, shortly before the Pan-Athenaea when the mosquitoes abound on the marshy banks, and the river flows muddy and sad, and there are so many stinging flies in the air that it is always necessary to bring a fan. But Socrates had forgotten his, and since I was younger than Plato I was fanning him, and at the same time trying to understand his discourse, for truly he was always discoursing at great length and would rarely suffer interruptions. But for a while Socrates remained in one of his accustomed fits of silence, but sometimes he would look up and smile at us, and so enchanting was his smile that we forgave him his fits of abstraction, and we even forgave him the irritating way in which he would stroke his beard. "Socrates is asleep," said Eryximachus. "If you wake him, he will die from the disease of seeing things as they are, for he has never yet left the world of his dreams." "Perhaps you are right," Socrates said slowly, and he was not yet fully awakened, "but a man who dedicates himself to perfect beauty must surely be allowed to see into his own mind. Do you remember the words of Glaucon? Glaucon said the boy was about sixteen, and his hair was yellow but dark at the roots, and something flowed under the dust of the boy's face in a cold stream of beauty. Is that what you said, Glaucon?" I told Socrates that he had changed only a single word, but I would agree to everything he said, for in the dusk the boy had indeed appeared beautiful. "Is he beautiful enough to be a god?" Socrates asked, and I said: "Surely, Socrates, it is not enough for a god to be beautiful, and there are many gods,

such as Hephaestus, who are not in the least comely. Surely a god must possess great powers which are rarely given to the young, and the gods are also immortal. All that is young is doomed and does not know that it is doomed, and all that is beautiful is tragic." Socrates glanced up at me under those beetling brows and said: "Bravo, Glaucon, but there are times when you talk like a middle-aged man and no one would know that until recently you also were a youth. But as for beauty being a part of tragedy I answer that tragedy may contain all things except beauty alone, and as you say that youth is doomed, I ask you to explain how it is that no one weeps when he sees a handsome youth, and one would say rather of old men than of youths that they are doomed. In what sense do you use the word doom? And why do you sigh? Are you still thinking of the youth who brushed past us a short while ago?"

It was dark. I heard Socrates muttering to himself, and the cries of the cicadas, and the sound of the water among the reeds, and I saw the first stars shining, and the gaunt shape of the Acropolis beneath the stars. I could see small flames shining among the hills, and the little fires coming from the low-roofed houses. The moon had not yet risen, and the Parthenon did not shine, but lay there dark and silent, with no smoking flames blowing down from the heights. It was not yet time for the ceremonies, and we wandered in the darkness, Socrates tapping the ground with his foot, for he was always careful at night, and I could hear him beating the bushes with his staff. I knew the moon would rise later, a young moon in a violet sky, and I thought we were going in the direction of the salt-lakes, but when we reached the red rock, Socrates said: "Let us rest here until the moon rises," and we sat down on the earth in the shadow of the rocks, and we lit a fire, and threw dry sage on the twigs, and the smoke rose against the red rocks. It was pleasant to watch the flames leaping and the smoke blowing over the river, and Socrates' face so red in the firelight as he sat with his gown rolled down to the waist, breathing hard, inhaling the fragrance of the sage and nodding sleepily with his head cupped on his staff. Eryximachus thought he was sleeping too easily, and took his pulse—it was a year before the famous trial—but the pulse was vigorous still, and Socrates smiled at him in that preposterous way

of his, a smile that was like a frown and also like a benediction, and said: "I think I shall live forever, O Eryximachus, and there is no need to take my pulse, because even if I were in fact dead, I am sure it would be beating." Eryximachus sighed. The conversation of the nature of God was not resumed. Socrates nodded, and sometimes, knowing that Plato was incapable of singing, he would say: "Plato, please sing for us," and he would laugh heartily at the confusion he caused.

By now the flames were leaping high and great shadows of smoke and fire appeared on the smooth surface of the red rock. A goatherd passed along the road between the fire and the rocks, and his huge shadow was thrown up on the wall, distorted and yet still recognisable. Socrates hailed him, but perhaps fearing robbers the goatherd passed more quickly and silently disappeared in the night. I would look at Socrates, seeing the gold scars on his body, and once I asked him about his experiences in the wars. "O Socrates," I said, "Xenophon says that when you were in Asia during the war you stood naked in the snow and remained silent for a long while—Xenophon says for a whole day and a whole night—and when morning came you gave a kiss to the sun and returned to your tent. What were you thinking of, Socrates? Were you thinking even then of the gods?"

I must have spoken with great force, for Socrates immediately woke from his dream, and peered at me as I lay on the other side of the fire. He smiled again, but this time it was a smile of perfect innocence and delight. "It may be, O Glaucon," he said, "that there is some special quality in the snows of Asia, for it is true that I was thinking of the snows. I remember I was weary. We had been fighting hard on the plains and when evening came we thought we were defeated and made for the hills. There we healed our wounds and prepared for the morrow, and many of us were sore, and still more of us were tired. I remember a feeling of utter exhaustion, as though I could go on no further. And then slowly the snows healed me. It was moonlight: the snows shone: we had bathed our wounds: the army was preparing to fight. It was one of the few days in my life which I can remember perfectly—every detail fresh on the memory. (And of how many days in life can one say that one

remembers every detail?) That was the most surprising thing—the clearness of the atmosphere, the feeling of life returning to us, the sensation of grief for the dead who remained in the plains and of utter exhaustion and of happiness. Have you noticed that our greatest happiness comes from exhaustion? In sleep—in combat—with a girl or a boy. And then too there was something strange in the atmosphere, something lucid and *youthful* in the snows, something that made us breathe as though every breath was the last. I was not the only one who went a little apart. There were many. There was Aristarchos from Delos, and the younger singer from Delphi whose name was Serapion, and there were others I have forgotten. And all that day and all night, and the next day and the remaining day, I saw the snows, and truly it was like a vision of youthfulness and freshness. One should watch the snows. The rippling—the shadows—how shall I express it? O, you who have lovers, remember there is greater sweetness in the snows, and there is no desire, there is only the contemplation of perfect beauty.”

“And is there no other perfect beauty?” I asked, laughing softly, for everyone knew that at this time Socrates spent the night in the arms of Philides.

Socrates was silent for a while.

“There is no other perfect beauty,” he said at last: and he seemed to withdraw in himself, in that inexplicable way of his, and perhaps he was receiving counsel from the daimon, and perhaps he was only dreaming.

It was Plato who then spoke, his harsh voice like the creaking of sparrows, his long face crimson in the light of the flames, poking the fires with his crooked staff, his gown loosely folded, so that the immense breadth of his shield-like chest shone in the flames. Eryximachus threw some dry sage on the flames; the fire crackled angrily; smoke blew out in puffs over the river; the goatskins filled with wine were passed round.

“Would you agree, Socrates,” he said, “that perfect beauty must be motionless?”

“Yes, certainly.”

“And therefore perfect beauty cannot be human?”

“Truly.”

"Nor can it be divine, for we know that the gods move?"

Socrates stirred the fire with his stick.

"But surely it is both divine and human," he said slowly, "and when you say that it is motionless, I will agree with you only if you say that it is also timeless. For perfect beauty is certainly motionless and timeless, outside space and outside time, since at the moment of recognition, we are withdrawn outside the world, and we see this beauty as something which is not part of our lives but outside our lives. I have seen a young girl smiling at the well: I have seen a young mother feeding her child: and at those moments I recognised perfect beauty and was transported outside space and time, into another country. And truly there is movement in immobility. The smile was movement: but I was not conscious of the movement, I was conscious only of the perfect beauty—the moment when the bird is shot by the arrow, when it hangs suspended in the air—which is motionless and outside time. And should I see someone dancing, this also might be a moment of perfect beauty, motionless and yet in movement, which is outside time: for at such moments the goddess gathers me by the hair and transports me to another country."

"I see, Socrates," Plato remarked, "that you are determined that there shall be time and no time, space and no space, motion and no motion—"

"Surely these things are possible," said Socrates. "Surely there is time and no time, space and no space—"

"What kind of country is this where there is no time, no space, and yet there is time and space? Tell me, Socrates, you who are an inhabitant of this strange country, what are the things you see there—what people live there—what food do they eat?"

"Of their food it is easiest to speak, for they live on asphodel, and of the people it is enough to say that they are all naked and shining in the sun, and they are handsome and unwounded, and sleep together like lovers—"

"You said there was no movement, and surely there is movement among lovers."

"I am talking about this country where there is no time and no space, where everything is eternal and everything passes in a moment

of time, in a moment less than a moment. I am talking of a place I have been to, a place in which I live habitually, and you must not ask me, Plato, to explain the inconsistencies of the place, for it exists, and I myself am a witness of its existence, and you also, since you have dreams. Have you noticed how in dreams the doors of the temples are always wide-open, how no one dies, or if he dies, he may be resurrected in the flesh, and there is no mourning. I speak of this place now, because you asked whether perfect beauty is human or divine, and I say it is neither human nor divine, but something other, something which is gathered up outside time and space—in a moment of illumination, in a moment less than time. And this is why we use the word 'freedom' and place the goddess of freedom on a mountain to which she is taken by Zeus by her golden hair, for we are so lifted up outside ourselves, we are so drunk in the presence of the strange people of this country—tell me, Plato, when you are drunk, when you are divinely happy, have you not heard, as from a distance, the sound of hidden laughter, coming from some other place? Have you not heard, as an echo of your own rejoicing, the distant sound of others rejoicing? When you are drunk, have not the lights shone brighter and have not the scents been keener and have not people appeared more beautiful? And I tell you that this beauty that you see, these scents, these lights are the reflections of the other country of which I speak about—a country which is not this country, and yet dimly resembles this country, and what name do we give to this country except the country of the *daimon*, in which we are all kings."

Socrates had been speaking so fast, he was so intoxicated with the sound of his own words and so unconscious of the presence of anyone except Plato that we were as though spell-bound; for this was not his habitual theory and was indeed in many ways opposed to it. And it was strange then, for we were all by this time a little drunk, and there were aromatic herbs in the fire; and we felt that we were all about to enter into this country, we could overhear the voices of the strangers who inhabited it, and at any moment the bright beauty which he spoke about would shine upon us.

"Socrates is a conjurer," Plato said. "He could summon up this country for us readily enough. He is like those eastern magicians

which Agapeides has spoken about—”

“Certainly I can summon up this country,” Socrates said, “but only for myself. I have only to close my eyes, or to gaze in contemplation at some beautiful object, and I am at once transported into this country—”

“But we are not so gifted, Socrates. We cannot transport ourselves there simply by wishing it—”

“Surely you can wish it—”

“No,” I said, “for I imagine that even the best of us must prepare himself by arduous pilgrimages and much cunning before he can enter any country but his own.”

“Well, then,” said Socrates, “I shall attempt to transport you to that country. If I fail, I shall provide the banquet in which we can drown our sorrows, and if I succeed, there will be no reason for banquets, since we shall all have tasted of asphodels.”

We looked at Socrates enquiringly, wondering what purpose there was in this strange declaration, and whether he could indeed lead us into the country of perfect beauty which he described.

I remember that the night became very dark with few stars shining; the cicadas had grown silent; a faint wind came from the olives and fig-groves; Socrates undid his robe and lay beside the fire; the goatskins were handed round, and some wine was poured on the flames in libation; and we were silent, waiting for the vision which Socrates had promised us. But there was no vision. Socrates was lost in a trance, and I remember that Eryximachus, who was sitting next to Socrates, placed his fingers on Socrates’ wrist, feeling the pulse, and I think we talked in low voices, speaking of many things, perhaps of the Parthenaea or perhaps of Philides, the handsome youth who attended Socrates and who had only that day taken the oath in the chapel of Aglaurus to serve his country as a soldier; for we all knew that Socrates was now lonely, and indeed we had arranged this excursion to distract his mind. And I remember that Plato, who is nervous in spite of the great breadth of his shoulders, was tittering a little, and drank more wine than the rest of us, and that we waited expectantly for the miracle.

Although I was younger by far than any of the others, and more credulous, I remember that I could not contain myself in the

presence of Socrates, but believed indeed that this time he would be in error, and—so rare a thing—we should attend the banquet on the morrow as his guests. I remember wondering where the banquet would be held, perhaps in his own house, and what kind of banquet it would be, and whether he would invite Cleo, the flute-girl, and if he did, how he would greet her. And then too I thought of the wines, and the great blue earthenware pot and the mats rolled up against the wall and the gold candlesticks which were the presents of Alcibiades, his only possessions. Oh and I thought of many other things too numerous to mention. And all the while I was gazing at Socrates who seemed to be slumbering, so heavy and silent was the rise and fall of his chest, and then suddenly I heard flutes and then I knew the miracle was upon us.

I cannot explain this thing, and indeed I know that I shall be laughed at, but Plato and Eryximachus are my witnesses that we were suddenly, and from that moment, transported into the country of the *daimon*. I remember a cold chill going down my spine, a relentless feeling of being pursued and cornered, a sensation that I was light and perhaps even transparent and no longer inhabited this world; and the cause of all this was nothing more than the dark-faced boy we saw earlier in the evening, who had called out "*Chairé*" to Socrates, and who came now into the light of the flames playing on his flute. And there was nothing extraordinary about this boy, except that he was dark and languorous, and moved with infinite grace. He did not wear now a chiton, but had some haphazard yellow robe which hung from his shoulders; and he advanced slowly until he stood between the rock and the flames, and the immense quivering shadow of the boy's body shone on the red rock.

How shall I explain it? There was nothing in the boy to recommend him, nothing strange or unusual, nothing to distinguish him from a thousand other young boys of his age except that he was dark. His body was evidently smeared with oil, for his face shone and there were dull patches of oil on his cloak. He was lithe, of course: when he moved, he did not seem to be moving, and when he lifted the flute to his lips, he did not seem to move his lips, and the muscles of his throat did not move, as they do with some youths, spoiling the effect. He stood there, dark eyes and black hair bound

with a fillet and coming down over his shoulder, and suddenly the yellow cloak fell from his shoulders, there was a sound as of thunder, the green flute was lifted to his lips and he began dancing, the huge shadow leaping and waving against the red wall. And what was strange was that the air seemed to be full of the electricity that comes before a storm, and the shadow leaped higher and higher as he advanced towards the flames, playing on the flute and dancing, and I heard Socrates whispering: "Do not look at the boy, although he is divine and dances angelically, but look at the shadow—how it springs on the rock—and see how strangely powerless is the boy in comparison with his huge shadow, and look how the shadow dances even when the boy remains still, and how the shadow partakes of the substance of the rock, being gaunt and sombre and rough, while the boy's body is pure and oiled, and see too that however swiftly the boy moves his arms the shadow moves more swiftly." And he went on in a softer voice: "Look, Glaucon, how still he is—he is motionless, but the shadow quivers on the rock, and what you see is not the boy's shadow dancing, but the flames dancing, and indeed all art is no more than a flame dancing on rock, and the boy's beauty is a flame, and is compounded of flames, and surely this is as it should be, since men are compounded out of rock and flames. And this is the most perfect art: for that out of which men are compounded, and that into which men go, is the substance of their art, and nothing could be more beautiful. The rock is motionless, but the flames move, and all this takes place at the same time, in the same moment which is outside time, and this is the divine splendour—"

I do not remember any more. I remember only that the boy continued dancing, the flames moved on the rock and that strange music in the Lydian mode came from the flute; and stranger still, we seemed no longer to be alone, but there appeared to be not only a single boy dancing, but hundreds of his attendants, and the air was flowing with wine, and the most costly robes and the most costly perfumes were being brought to us, and truly we tasted the asphodels. How long this dancing lasted I do not know. I did not look at the boy. I watched the shadows like someone entranced. You must remember that the rock was not perfectly smooth, but rough and indented, and therefore the shadow possessed three

dimensions, with breadth and depth, and this immense shadow (for the boy danced so close to the fire that he sometimes touched us with his knees) was as tall as the gilded Zeus at Olympia. And then—but I hesitate to tell this—a stranger thing still occurred, for Socrates began to talk in a low voice to the boy, not in Greek but in Syrian, which we understood only indifferently well, yet the sense of what they said was clear to us. Socrates said: "O boy, you have innocence and have grown like a flower and dance like a flower—so I thought when I saw you this evening—but where have you learned to dance like a rock and like flame?" The boy said: "Socrates, I dance because I am a wanderer and have no country. I am a Syrian, and now I dance and wander over Greece playing on my flute. I am a wanderer from the East, and have no place where to rest my head at night, and therefore I sing." Socrates said: "Truly you sing marvellously, but the flame sings still more marvellously, and yet truly in your perfect freedom and beauty you are like a god." The boy said: "I am a god, Socrates, this truly I know, but perhaps all men are gods—" "No, only those who live in perfect freedom are gods," Socrates said, and he gazed at the boy without desire, as though he was gazing at something he did not understand, and then the dancing continued, and it was as though the red rock was the gate of the angels, and the place was sacred, and the boy was the divine messenger into the place where there is no time and no space, and at the same there is time and space, and we tasted the asphodels.

And though the boy danced again and we watched him, for he possessed many different dances and played many different tunes, and though we stoked the fire so that the flames rose, we were never conscious again that we were entering the gates. A cool wind came from the fig-groves, and soon there was the false dawn. We must have slumbered, for when I woke up a faint yellow light was shining on the oleanders, and then on the olive-trees, and then on the tamarinds, and I saw the maidens descending to the sacred wells, and there was no sign of the boy except for the heaped dust and the oil-stained yellow robe. The fire had gone out. Plato was asleep. Somewhere among the bushes I saw an ox-cart drawing a load of blue-veined marble from Pentelikos, and then daybreak came, and it

was all blue and gold, and the last embers of the fire died out in the all-embracing blue which came down from the heavens, and there was no sound except the scraping of Socrates' feet as he stood up and kissed the sun with his hand, and then we departed.

The House

KAYE STARBIRD

Weep soft in the beautiful house. Tomorrow
and always, the dust will fall,
light on the lavender carpet that stretches, as costly as sorrow,
from wall to wall.

The couch is deep, and the books are leather and gilt,
The lamps match the beige wing chair.
This is no world of walls-to-the-weather. This is a world you built,
placing each irretrievable hour, each cushion and candlestick
with care,
even to putting the flawless, treacherous mirrors
everywhere.

Why are you weeping here?
The silver is sleek, the pewter bright,
with never a mark on the table's varnish.
No one with manners will peer in closets or back of eyes
for the things pushed out of sight
that you left to tarnish.

I don't mean love.
No. Love was a sapphire ring that warmed your hand while it shone,
and you ought to try forgetting
the terrible moment you noticed the missing stone.
Who cares what you paid for the intricate
empty
platinum setting?

... Remember the great proud moon that owned the sky,
the untidy stars

and your conversations with trees?

Try not to be desperate. Try to remember why
you happened to wall away your trust in these.

There was the autumn, too: the blowsy asters and every-which-way
clover,

the swish of the heedless, hurrying leaves
and the smell of sun on the grapes.

—When did you start putting fruit in a dresden dish and worrying
over which flowers would go with the drapes?

The great proud moon has shrunk to a pallid bubble.

Small among neon moons, it moves uncertain.

The tree at the window gave a little trouble,
but you outwitted the tree. You pulled the curtain.

Security is quiet about its treasons.

You never knew when you lost the courage to be alone with stars.
Somewhere, you took the vines in a heated room for seasons
and sealed the attar of living in monogrammed, matching jars.

Tonight, wherever you look, you see
your face as it once was not and cannot be,
weeping in mirrors and staring, distorted, from burnished bowls.
Why do you thumb your rosary of intentions now?

It is too late for you to envy orioles
swinging in some precarious home on a willow bough.

And how can it matter what you do or you don't recall?
You can't bring back the hour you blew with the blowing leaves
into a hall.

You probably only meant to rest from the rain a minute,
tiptoeing down through the hall to the big, bare room
with the fireplace in it.

You probably only wanted your coat to dry when you hung it up
on the peg upon the wall.

But, now that the door's long-shut and the wind grown shy,
whom are you blaming or hating?

Did you think, when you stored your Aprils and autumns away like
napkins, they'd stay there folded and waiting?

The China Rose

LORNA BEERS

WHAT YOU DOIN', Minnie May?"

"Crackin' nuts."

"Well, stop it."

Minnie May went on cracking nuts, but she removed the anvil from the table to her lap to muffle the sound. She was a small woman whose graying hair would not stay under the comb, and whose ways had the apparent timidity but the actual instinctive persistence of a mouse. Her older sister, Bessie Blount, sat upright as a queen in a straight chair by the window. She was dressed in black calico which was faintly sprigged with gray. Her hair, mostly black, was twisted in a bun on top of her head. She gave the impression of a general sitting on his horse watching the course of a battle.

It was April, the mud season. The brown and drab landscape was bare. Down the hill across the road the ruined kilns of the Blount Potteries were visible through the lacework of bare cherry and maple seedlings. Blount Pottery was still to be found in antique shops. It was watched for at country auctions.

Bessie Blount leaned forward slightly and looked out of the window. Minnie May was used to having her sister suddenly stare at a spot in the room as if she saw a stain on the paper. "Spider glances" was what Minnie May came to call them, for a light seemed to leap from Bessie Blount's eyes, travel along a web which she had spun immediately around her, and retreat into the burnished little orbs from which it had come. A glance out of the window was different enough for Minnie May to hold her hammer poised and stare.

Bessie Blount took a fold of the scrim curtain and held it cautiously before her. "Who's that, Minnie May? Is he coming here? What's he coming here for? What does he want here?"

Minnie May put down her anvil and hammer and looked

cautiously through the curtain. "It's a man, that's who. He's goin' up to the new folks. Ain't he got a right to?"

"Stirrin' round! Stirrin' round! Everybody's stirrin' round. No good will come of it."

"He's stoppin'. No, he's goin' on. Ain't nobody ever comin' here. Not ever," said Minnie May.

"Stirrin' round. Stirrin' round. Let God be the judge."

"I could do with some stirrin' round, Bessie Blount. I could do with some seeing what the world is like."

"I have overcome the world," said Bessie Blount.

"That's blasphemy."

"Don't be impertinent." She dropped the curtain. "I guess you don't recollect what day this is."

"It's bakin' day," said Minnie May, taking up the hammer and reaching for a hickory nut.

"It's my anniversary."

"If a man treated me the way he treated you I'd put him out of my mind."

"There's ways and ways of keepin' a person in mind, Minnie May. There's lovin' ways and hateful ways, and hateful ways are strongest." She lifted her right hand and looked intently at a ring, a strange band of black enamel.

The wood fire crackled in the kitchen stove. The kettle sang. The cat on the rug audibly licked its fur. Minnie May cracked nuts.

Bessie Blount leaned forward again. "There's the man, Minnie May. He's comin' back, sloggin' through the mud. I guess he left his automobile at the foot of the hill. Now he's stoppin'. Cleanin' the mud off his shoes with a switch he broke off our lyelacs. What makes him think he's free to break our lyelacs. He's rubbin' his shoes on our grass. It looks like he was comin' here." She pulled the curtain before her like a veil. "What's he comin' here for? What does he want here? I wonder who he is. Have you ever seen him in Doncaster, Minnie May?"

Minnie May looked, cautiously staying behind the curtain.

"Yes, I've seen him in Doncaster."

"Well, who is he? What does he want here?"

"It's Luke Cokesbury, that's who it is. That has the antique

place in Doncaster, and his wife with him in the shop rubbin' chairs with sandpaper, wearin' pants like a man."

"What's he comin' here for?"

"To see if we have anything to sell, that's what for."

"Sell! Tell him to mind his own affairs."

"Last time I was in Doncaster he came up to me and says, Miss Blount, would you or your sister have any Blount pottery or things of that sort you'd be wanting to sell?"

"Well, I hope you sent him about his business, Minnie May."

"I said maybe we don't and maybe we do."

"Have you gone daft?"

"Not so daft I don't know the taxes 'll be coming up this spring. You set there and say you've overcome the world, but that don't stop the taxes from comin' in. If you've overcome the world I don't see why it would matter to you one way or the other if Luke Cokesbury bought that bar'l in the woodshed that's full of things you've never looked at for fifty years and don't even know what's in it."

"Minnie May, you're touchin' on things you were told never to mention. Do you think I've kept silence on them things fifty years to listen to you now flauntin' 'em in my face?"

"You brought it up yourself. You said it's my anniversary. I wouldn't have brought it up else. I'd have said, sell the things in the cabinet in the parlor, the china dogs and the tea set. You brought it up yourself."

"Well, tell him to go away. Tell him we don't want any man coming around here." She let the curtain fall and edged her chair away from the window.

When she was nineteen years old, Ben Pickins, the new manager of the potteries, married her under the illusion the Blounts had more money than they had. There was a brief honeymoon in Boston. They were home two days when he looked in her face at breakfast, laughed, flung down his napkin, and walked out. He left town before noon with pretty Mattie Hicks, who painted the four-leafed clover and the blueberries freehand on the pottery.

"As for him," said Hiram Blount, "it's a good riddance. But it's likely we'll never get anybody to paint blueberry twigs the way

Mattie Hicks did. She had a knack for painting blueberries."

The marriage was annulled, and Bessie Pickins became Bessie Blount again. Her wedding ring she regarded as having been put on her finger in the presence of God, and she continued to wear it, but she had it lacquered black and wore it on her right hand instead of her left, "the side of the heart." For fifty years she had left the house only to go to church or family funerals. The wedding presents, in a barrel ready to be carted to the young people's house as soon as they found one, were never unpacked. Most of them had never been unwrapped.

The man now knocked on the kitchen door. "Tell him to go away. Tell him we got nothing to sell. Tell him we don't want no men coming around here."

Minnie May opened the door a crack. "My sister Bessie, she's not feelin' so good today. I'm sorry you had your trouble for nothin'. But we got a tea set. Likely we'll sell it. Likely we won't. If you're comin' this way it wouldn't do no harm to ask." She closed the door slowly, as one pushes down a lid.

She opened the oven, pressed her finger on the cake, and put the pans on the table.

Bessie Blount drummed with her fingers on the window sill. "Minnie May, where's that bar'l you were mentioning?"

"You know right enough where it is. It's in the woodshed by the kindlin', same place it's been for fifty years."

"Minnie May, I'm wanting to see them things."

Minnie May said nothing. She stirred the frosting.

"Minnie May, fetch me them things."

"Why don't you fetch them yourself? You can fetch them as well as me. I'm stirrin' the frostin'. You're always sayin' you've overcome the world. I guess what you mean is you can set there like a mortified queen, and leave me to do all the work."

"Don't be impertinent."

Minnie May put the hickory nuts in the frosting and began to spread it over the cake. Her life was dull, her curiosity lively, and when she set the cake on the pantry shelf she was in a frame of mind to fetch the parcels from the barrel.

"Here's the clothes basket full of 'em, Bessie, wrappin's and all."

"Time don't mean nothin', Minnie May. Calendars don't mean nothin'. Here's fifty years gone—puff, like a breath of wind. It was a day like this, open and shut, mud in the roads that stuck to the spokes, and the willows were reddening in the slough. Nothin's happened since that day, Minnie May. Time's stood still. What's this on top?" She unwrapped the brittle paper. "It's a coffee grinder. Read the card, Minnie May. Whoever give that put water in the ink. Flossie Bingham. Drawer's broke. It's like her to buy one with the drawer broke. Got it for less, I expect."

"Bessie, it's not fittin' to speak so of the dead."

"Dead? Who's dead? She come to the weddin' fitted out fancier than me."

"Well, she's layin' in the South Doncaster buryin' ground, and her husband beside her."

"Dead? Then the Lord struck her down."

"Didn't nobody strike her down. She had grandchildren all over the county and she had rheumatiz' and she was glad to go."

"Well, put it on the table. It ain't good for nothin' with the drawer broke, but put it on the table. Here's a servin' spoon. Black as a shoe. You'd think they'd polish it before they give it. Deacon Prattle. Always was tight. I allow when he gets his fingers on the silver on the plate some of it sticks."

"They're dead, both of 'em."

"Dead? Then the Lord struck 'em down. I'm not surprised. Look at this mirror. Somebody's been shootin' it with a slingshot and pebbles, that's what. Can't see in it no better than down a well. Andy Poole, and he wrote a verse.

'Look into this faithful mirror.

What you see brings heaven nearer.'

What does he mean by that?"

"I guess he meant you were pretty," said Minnie May, looking at her doubtfully.

"Pretty! I can't see nothin' any more than looking down a well. He was always jokin'. He asked me if I'd marry him. He said, 'Will you marry me, Bessie Blount?' We were ridin' in a row boat on Ely's millpond. I said, No, I won't. I can't stand a man that's always

jokin', I said. He's carryin' his jokin' too far, sending a glass black as a puddle in the night."

"He's dead."

"Dead?"

"In the war forty years ago. They brought him back in a coffin covered with flags. I went to the funeral with Pa and Ma, but you was settin' here like a mortified queen."

"Put it on the table."

Minnie May went to the woodshed for another load. Pitchers, plates, wooden potato mashers, an iron griddle, a china clock were added to the heap on the table. Minnie May read each card and said with increasing solemnity, "Dead."

"I've outlived 'em all. Let God be the judge. Minnie May, light the bay candles. Use the crystal candlesticks Ma had. What you gawpin' for? Do like I tell you."

Minnie May looked at her askance, but she went to the parlor and got the crystal sconces from their brackets on either side of the secretary desk. The pendants tinkled like ice as she carried them across the hall and into the dining room. She stood, holding the flickering candles high, looking at her sister in amazement. Bessie Blount had left her chair. She was pushing the gifts about, shoving one before each chair. She sat abruptly, breathing hard, in the chair at the head of the table.

"Who settin' where?" She peered about, her hands trembling.

"I don't see nobody, Bessie. Only just the things."

"Settin' there. And everyone dead. I guess they laughed at me. I guess they made the kind of foul talk no good woman would listen to, and about how he went with me to Boston, and then left my bed. I guess that made them speculate, and the tobacco juice running out of the corner of their mouths. But I set here and waited and let God be the judge. And they're dead. Every one of them dead. How do you like it, settin' there, let loose from where you are to listen to me? I said I'd overcome the world, and I've done it, settin' here and waitin'."

"You're daft. You've gone daft," said Minnie May. The crystal jingled as she set the sconces on the table.

"Look at 'em settin' there, and everyone dead."

"It's good you made that cake, Minnie. Maybe they'd like a sip of that wild cherry wine. I guess we can make an elegant celebration like Pa and Ma used to do, and they'll see my spirit's not broke because he laughed in my face and walked out, and eleven times we'd had the same bed. Fetch the cake."

Minnie May went to the kitchen, from where she peered around the door like a frightened calculating mouse. With a wary movement she fetched the cake and put it on the table. "Would you be wanting birthday candles?"

"Don't be impertinent."

"You haven't got 'em all yet. There's more."

"More what?"

"Presents. In the bottom of the bar'l. There's more."

"Well, fetch 'em. What you standing there for? Fetch 'em."

She brought three parcels in the basket. "This is all. This is them. Would you be wanting me to undo them?"

She broke the brittle paper and held out a candle snuffer of wrought iron.

"Who give it?"

"Lucy White. With best wishes for your happiness. She's dead."

"Put it there. With her airs. Polka dots on her veil. She was laughin' when he left me, holdin' her handkerchief before her mouth. But I've outlived her. What you got there?"

"It's pretty. It's a chiny hand holdin' a rose. Look at the chiny lace around the wrist. It's a red rose. It's a Dorothy Perkins, that's what it is. It's pretty."

"Who give it?"

Minnie May hesitated. "May all your dreams come true. That's what it says."

"I don't care what it says. Who give it?"

"Mattie Hicks give it."

There was a long silence. At last, "Dead?"

"No, she ain't dead."

"She's got to be dead. She's got to be dead," muttered Bessie Blount.

"Well, she ain't, and what's more she's one you haven't overcome settin' and glowerin' like a mortified queen." Minnie May put

the china hand on the table near the candles. The rose lay weightless between the extended fingers and the delicate thumb. Minnie May walked around the table.

"It's pretty. That's what it is. It's the prettiest of all. It makes me think of Valentine's Day and putting the valentines in the box at school. That wasn't foolishness, though you used to think so at the time, Bess."

"You're certain she ain't dead?"

"Yes, I'm certain. It's pretty. I remember I fixed a box for the box social, all paper lace and red hearts. I frosted the cakes nice. Roy Bingham bought it, that was drowned in Ely's pond when the ice broke under all them skaters. He kissed me under the cherry blossoms that spring, and I guess if he hadn't been drowned I'd have been wife and mother and not buried here listenin' to you talk about overcomin' the world when what you mean is that you hate every speck and thread of it, and you don't want anyone else to live, either."

"Not dead?" said Bessie Blount doubtfully, staring at the rose. The candlelight sparkled on the ruby petals like drops of dew.

"That's Mattie's hand. That's the way she held those little brushes when she painted the blueberry sprigs so nice. That's Mattie's hand pluckin' the rose of life, Bess. I'd forgot what it is to pick the rose of life, Bess, but that pretty chiny hand brings it back. It was a wicked conjurin' you were up to, Bess, makin' things more endurin' than people. It's these things that have brought it all back. Roy Bingham and the basket social, and May Day, settin' under the cherry trees. I'd forgot what it was to pluck the rose of life, but these things make it known to me again. It wasn't just the ice breakin' on Ely's pond that kept me from pluckin' the rose of life. It was you, Bess, sittin' and lordin' it over us all like a mortified queen."

"If she ain't dead, where is she?" said Bessie Blount.

"She's in South Doncaster, that's where she is. In the house her folks left her. Her slip's forgot, and she has a boy that's a captain in the navy, and one that took after her, paintin' pictures as nice as she painted blueberries. Oh, she plucked the rose of life, and she's still got it. She's still holdin' it in her hand, thorns and all. You brought back these things, and now you can set and fancy just what

it is a woman does to get two handsome boys like that, and serve you right, settin' and not pluckin' the rose of life, or lettin' anyone else pluck it either."

The flames wavered, the crystal sconces sparkled, and the hand with the rose, glowing like jewels and enamel, lay in the middle of the table.

Song from the Urdu

WILLIS EBERMAN

Come now, as the light is going, my love:
come to my heart.

The world is darkening; we will not fear
while in this garden our flowers burst with color.
The golden spiders cling to the bright bamboo.
Chrysanthemums are budding. Zinnias jewel the south wall.

I have prepared the tawny wine of our love.
I have poured it into the cups of the flowers:
come, drink. Life is joyous. Come before darkness
covers the gems of the garden, O my small love,
my dancing butterfly.

I have gathered the leaves of the locust,
and the leaves of the apple branches.
The skein of the light is breaking; the last
threads are tangled in the tall grasses.
Smoke rises from leaves; and your image . . .
the pale feet are dancing, studded with rubies:
ah, you have come. You are dancing,
swathed in the incense of leaves.

In the Summer When It's Hot

D. J. VINCENT

ALL DOWN the Ben River valley the corn was in flood. It filled the bottom land from the railroad tracks to Osage Bluffs and washed on up the slopes in little hillside patches. Every day the highway mowers were on patrol keeping it back from the pavement, but along the side roads it lapped over into the ditches and right on up to the edge of the roadway itself.

"And they'd plow that up, too, if the county'd let 'em, and plant *it* to corn while they were at it."

From her front porch Edna Conrad looked out on the narrow dirt track of the county road. She could see one way as far as the bridge over Turkey Creek. The other way, the road turned and her view was cut short by solid ranks of corn, like the rows marching up on either side and to the back of the house, without even a fence between.

"We'll fence our stock in, not out," Ira had said. So a narrow lane ran back of the barn down across the creek to the pasture, and the rest was unfenced corn field. Looked at from the house, the lane got swallowed up by corn before it started, so there was no place for Edna to stretch her eyes except along the one little piece of road in front, and nothing to look at there. Sometimes a car went by, but not often. Sometimes cars from the other direction parked at the bridge, and then she knew the fish were biting in Turkey Creek.

Even this little she didn't see much. A woman alone, with a farm to see to and a boy to raise, doesn't spend much time sitting on the front porch, or sitting anywhere at all, for that matter. Just before he died, Ira had fixed it that way. "Don't sell the place," he had said. And no matter what had changed in two years, no matter how hard it was, Edna couldn't explain to him. She could have as many good reasons as kernels of corn, but *he* had the last word: "Don't ever sell the place, Edna. Keep it for the boy."

"He didn't know how hard it'd be," she told herself. This on a

day in late July when the sun struck off the glossy leaves of corn bright enough to blind, and the whole valley lay steaming in its own hot juices; a day when Edna had gotten up at dawn to can tomatoes, and now, past noon, still worked in the undried sweat of morning. The only thing moving outside was the heat waves dancing on the tall corn, and she had pulled down the kitchen blinds so she couldn't see that.

"It's too much," she said, but she bent to pick up another full bushel of tomatoes. She wrestled it awkwardly toward the stove where steam rose up from pans of simmering water thick enough to suffocate.

"Mrs. Conrad," said a voice at the screen door behind her.

A man's voice, and Edna's hands forgot the bushel basket in a grab at her blouse, which she had unbuttoned for coolness in the stifling kitchen.

The basket dropped, scraping skin all the way, tipped over and scattered tomatoes out across the kitchen floor. Edna gave a little shriek.

"You all right, Mrs. Conrad?"

She threw a glance over one shoulder but all she could make out was a man's shape blacked out solid against the sun's glare, and so tall and wide it almost filled the doorway. She jerked her head back around, afraid her face would somehow give away the still-unbuttoned blouse, and opened her mouth to answer. The fanning of a brighter light into the room and the twang of the stretched door spring stopped the words and lumped them hard in her throat.

"Maybe I can help," he said.

She heard the door softly shut; heard his footsteps coming up behind her. Clutching at her blouse, she moved blindly ahead of the footsteps, toward the stove with its pans of steaming water. Brought up short by the stove edge, she stood stiff and helpless. Down went a head in the corner of her vision, and then the man was kneeling on the floor beside her, picking up the scattered tomatoes.

"Cleve McKinzie!"

"This basket's too heavy for you to carry by yourself that way."

He did not look at her when he spoke, which would have been the natural thing, and by that she knew that he had seen or guessed

about her blouse. He kept close, though, and there was a grin on his face. He was just that kind.

Face burning, Edna finished up the buttons. "You're lucky you didn't get a pan of scalding water in the face."

"Now what for?"

"You know what for. Sneaking up that way. Coming in here without even knocking."

"You looked like you could use some help."

"I was doing fine till you came along."

Edna began snatching up tomatoes from the floor and dropping them in her apron. Cleve McKinzie squatted on his heels by the bushel basket and watched her. She worked out across the kitchen floor away from him, not looking his direction but moving quick and jerky and being extra careful about her skirt. Cleve smiled to himself.

She got most of the tomatoes in the first rush, and her apron was so full she had to move carefully not to spill it. Still she didn't go near Cleve and the bushel basket, but went frowning into corners and under chairs. Cleve sat tight until there was no place else for her to look, and when she kept on with it anyway he smiled to himself again, got up and stretched, and moved over to the doorway. She went stooping and peering around the table in the center of the room, and came on the bushel basket with a look of "Well, there you are."

"Now that's adding insult to injury," Cleve remarked as Edna dropped the corners of her apron and let the tomatoes fall any which way into the basket. "You figuring on making tomato juice, are you?"

It was no use, Edna decided, trying to explain the way she'd acted. She couldn't possibly bring up about the blouse, and the rest of it would only look worse the second time around. Surprise, maybe, was reason enough for the way she'd talked, but that silly business about the tomatoes— All she could do now was let it go and hope he'd do the same, though you couldn't count on anything with Cleve McKinzie. According to what folks said, anyway. She didn't know him herself more than to nod and "how-are-you?" It sounded like his idea of a joke, though, popping up out of nowhere that way.

She hadn't heard a car or anything.

Edna put on her company tone. "You want to see Mr. Wilkinson, I expect. He's over in the pasture fixing fence," she said, clearly telling him to take the information he had come for, and leave.

"I guess maybe it can get too hot even for a worker like Bryan Wilkinson. He looked to be taking it pretty easy anyway when he crossed the bridge half an hour ago in Jess Rankin's pickup. They were heading toward town, the last I saw."

Edna's first thought was "without even telling me," and by that she could measure how much she had come to depend on Bryan Wilkinson. "Fixing fence wasn't part of the bargain," she told herself sternly. "He was to farm the place on shares was all. I guess he can come and go as he pleases, Edna Conrad, without asking it of you." Aloud she said, "I'll tell him you stopped by."

"That's all right. I don't mind waiting."

It struck Edna then that if he'd known Bryan was gone, he had no reason to come up to the house at all. Or no good reason, anyway. And that brought to mind all the stories whispered in the county about Cleve McKinzie.

She shook off the fear that laid quick hold. "A good woman doesn't need any protection but her own good name," she repeated to herself. It had been one of Ira's favorite sayings. He had always added, "unless a man's insane." Looking at the man standing before her so easy and smiling, Edna guessed that she'd heard a lot of things about Cleve McKinzie, but never that he was crazy. And she had no doubt at all of her own good name in the county.

"It might be a long wait," she hinted.

"It might be."

Which was polite enough but it wasn't what she'd wanted, and it didn't tell her what he was up to, hanging around her kitchen without any excuse. Even Bryan would not stop inside for more than a minute or two. Folks talked quick enough as it was; there was no need to give them a reason.

"Well!" she said, and forced a smile. She wasn't going to stay here alone with him, but she tried to make it casual. "Buddy will be glad for someone to talk to. He gets lonesome here with just his old mother."

Cleve raised his eyebrows at that, and the way he looked her over couldn't help but remind her she wasn't any older than he was, and "old" was not a word that came to mind about him. A lot of others did, though; Ira used to say you could put the Lord's Prayer in Cleve McKinzie's mouth and it'd come out sounding like a dirty story. Edna gripped her hands tight in shame at herself: "What makes a person talk so silly?" she thought. "Whatever he says it's no more than I asked for."

But Cleve only looked.

"I'll call him," Edna went on hastily.

"The boy? He ought to be pretty near down to the creek by now. He was out back of the barn digging worms, so I lent him my tackle and told him where the fish might be biting."

Edna could not pretend to be casual about that. "You didn't send Buddy down to the creek! I've told him never to—He *knows* how I feel about it. Oh! A little boy like that—He's hardly more than a baby."

Her first anxious rush took her around the table and toward the door where—she didn't know how it happened because she hadn't seen him move—Cleve McKinzie stood square in the doorway. He smiled a little, like a man does at the foolishness of a woman. "Now how old is the boy?" His voice was easy and interested as if they'd just been talking of this and that and hit on the subject of her son. Not at all as if Edna was hauled up short a few inches from his nose, her eyes straining past him.

Edna glanced at him, realized how close she was, and backed up a step or two. He watched her, smiling, and never offered to move. They stood like that while their eyes had it out, with the doorway just a starting point. Edna strained back against the tension that built up between them. Finally she gave a little gasp and grabbed at the last thing that had been said. "He's—Buddy's five, going on six."

"Well, now." Cleve settled himself in the doorway as if the whole thing had been settled, and Edna protested "No! No"—but not out aloud. "Well now, he's plenty old enough to take care of himself. You don't want to keep him too close, you'll make a sissy out of him. What that boy needs is a man around the place."

His tone of voice managed to write off Bryan Wilkinson at the same time it suggested "you" in place of "boy." Edna couldn't bother about that. It was what he had said about keeping Buddy too close that went deep and needed an answer.

She looked quickly toward the little bedroom off the kitchen. The big double bed where Buddy slept alone ought to be answer enough. They'd cried, both of them, when she'd moved him from her room out here, but now Buddy took to the change like the big boy she had told him he was, while she— The lonesome ache of it, especially at night, ought to be answer enough.

Cleve's look had followed hers and was fixed on the bed. He looked so long that Edna's eyes were drawn back to it to stare and keep on staring in a long, tight, silence that broke only when she realized that the bed had not been made; she snatched at that as a reason for the staring. "He's only five," she said, defending Buddy's rumpled, dragging sheets.

"Going on six," he reminded, continuing their conversation. "Lot of boys driving a tractor that age."

"We don't need to put children to work on *this* place." The joke in the county was that the McKinzie kids were put to milking cows as soon as they were taken off the breast, and the only reason Cleve waited that long was that a nursing baby might sneak some of the milk for itself. Remembering the six or seven tangle-haired McKinzie children made Edna suddenly angry. "We get along fine just the way we are," she said coldly.

That should have ended it. The words were flat and final. They practically told him to get out. All Edna had to do was wait.

But waiting gave her a chance to think, and, thinking, she remembered Cleve's remark about needing a man around the place. Letting that go without an answer seemed poor thanks to Bryan for all he had done. Cleve's hand was on the door to leave when Edna spoke again. "Mr. Wilkinson has been a big help."

He turned slowly and looked her over again. "Like he was trying to decide about a heifer at the sale barn," Edna told herself. But Cleve McKinzie's glance, even polite and at a distance, always made her think of how she looked, and this one, up close and not polite at all, put her in a sweat. "It's so hot in here," she thought.

"And these old clothes— The best thing is not to take any notice."

She folded her arms across her chest—awkwardly and closely, as if her blouse were still unbuttoned—and met Cleve's look with a bright "Yes! I couldn't have gotten along without Mr. Wilkinson."

Cleve smiled. "I bet," he said, and settled himself again.

Edna blushed, partly because he might think she had been trying to get him to stay when she had only wanted to be fair to Bryan; partly at the way he said "I bet." Coming from him it was sure to mean something indecent, and while she didn't have anything to worry about there, the tone was enough to remind her how it might look to other people, Bryan's helping her out the way he did.

At first she had tried to thank him. Tears still came easy then, so close to Ira's passing, and she had been choked up at Bryan's goodness at coming over night and morning to do chores when he had his own work and all. "Now, Mrs. Conrad," he had said, looking away from her teary face, "there's no need for that." His wide, flat mouth had gaped open and shut as if he were gasping for air—but then he had asthma, people said. Finally he got in a big breath, and drew himself up solemn as a preacher: "What I'm doing is no more than right. We're put here to help each other out, and I'm only doing what anybody would do."

He was the one who was doing it, was the point, but Edna didn't press it. The stiff-necked speech put her off Bryan Wilkinson for awhile, in spite of all his goodness and help. She felt she wanted to keep things even between them, and she baked him pies or cakes, or sometimes sewed buttons on his shirts, knowing he had no one to do for him since his wife had died. This baking and sewing for a widower—"but he's old," Edna told herself, "in his forties, anyway"—put Edna in the way of talk, but her mind was clear about it. It was always "Mrs. Conrad" and "Mr. Wilkinson," and distance between them to match. After a year or so, sometimes it was "Edna" this or that, but time made that seem natural and nothing else had changed. Until a month ago.

She had been partly to blame, but again she had only wanted to show him her thanks. "Oh Bryan," she had exclaimed, and put her hand on his arm. "I wish Ira could know all you've done."

He had stared down at her hand. "I didn't do it for *him*, Edna."

And because of that and the solemn pop-eyed look he wore, Edna found herself blushing in front of Cleve McKinzie. She raised her hands to hide her cheeks from Cleve's knowing eyes, and it was Bryan her anger turned on. "The old fool," she snapped inwardly. "No older than Ira was," a calmer self returned. "He might at least have shaved." "Instead of working his head off for you the way he's been doing." "That's all he *ever* does. He's so—oh, I don't know." "He's a good hard-working man, and he's going to make you an honest offer. It's not every woman gets *two* such chances in this life. What is it you want, Edna Conrad?"

Edna rubbed her hands across her eyes to shut out Cleve's face—Why wouldn't it always be smooth and clean? He never wasted any time working. "I'm—I've got a lot of work to do," she said.

"You go right ahead, Mrs. Conrad."

"All you have to do," she told herself, "is tell him to leave."

She turned and walked to the stove where the water still simmered. Working there was like deliberately stepping into a hot steam bath, clothes and all. Edna picked up a few tomatoes and put them in a pan of water to scald.

"Pretty hot for canning," Cleve offered gently from his post in the doorway.

The hint of sympathy plucked at her and set her to trembling. Bryan had stuck his head in the kitchen early that morning, and, seeing her already deep in canning and sweat, had nodded complacently. "I admire a saving woman, Edna." Almost Ira's words exactly.

Edna speared the tomatoes and swiftly peeled them. "It's hot," she agreed flatly.

Cleve said nothing more for several minutes, but his eyes never left her, and Edna could not move the same as if she were alone. She found herself turning toward the door oftener than she needed to, and tossing her hair back from her face. She made a point of not looking Cleve's direction. "Now don't be such a fool," she told herself, and forced her eyes up in a casual glance at Cleve. But then she couldn't move them on past him as she had planned.

"It's like at church," she realized with a little thrill of fear. "But he can't have thought that meant anything."

At church there had been a roomful of people between—neighbors and relatives in their good dark dresses and suits, and children, all jittery with Sunday—and it had seemed different, staring at Cleve McKinzie. *He* had started it, looking at her once or twice so she couldn't help noticing, and then openly staring at her all during the service. With his wife and children right there beside him, too, but the talk was that being married didn't hamper Cleve very much. Edna hadn't known what to do. It wasn't a thing you could complain about, just looking, the way he did. She could hardly breathe or move, for knowing that his eyes were on her. And once or twice she had looked back at him, just a glance to see if he was still staring—and once or twice, longer than that. Not that he was handsome. It was his easy smile, his knowing look, his way of moving that caught and held a woman's eyes.

"But only once or twice," Edna protested, and realized she was still hanging on his look while the kettleful of tomatoes boiled away under her very nose and the long wooden spoon lay slack in her hand.

Such foolishness made her angry, and she swung about and began stirring the tomatoes furiously. The fire was too high under the kettle, and the tomatoes bubbled and seethed, and frothed up red around the spoon handle. "Like little fires reaching up to get me," she thought, and she gripped the spoon hard and stirred as if she were beating back flames.

"Here now," Cleve said softly. "Here now."

His voice was as bad as his look for saying more than it should and Edna would have told him so, except that it was hard to complain about something he hadn't actually said. She kept her head turned away from him, though, and began filling the bright scalded jars with steaming tomatoes.

"You don't want a draft on those hot jars," Cleve said easily and closed the inside kitchen door.

It seemed to Edna that the heat and steam rose up then all at once and closed in around her till she could barely breathe. "Like the corn," she thought, and while she wondered confusedly what the corn had to do with it, her body was shaken by old fears, and by the memory of a hundred nights when she had listened to the

secret rustle of the corn around the house, and struggled with a sense of suffocation.

Having remembered so much, she fought against the rest. But it was no use. Her body faithfully repeated the pattern of those nights: the tenseness, the helplessness, the frightening ache of waiting. And then a little quiver going over her like gooseflesh, light at first, and not unpleasant, if it would only stop at that. She could feel herself go all soft and open, an eyeless, earless lump that gave itself up to the savage force that stirred in those fertile acres and broke over her like hot waves across her flesh. While all the time there was the ache of waiting for what never came.

Since Ira had died it had been much worse, but never as bad as today, when her skin quivered hotly, and her breath strained inside her fit to burst.

Blindly Edna kept on ladling the tomatoes. "Here, let me," said Cleve's voice close behind her, and his arms came around. "You'll spill it." One hand took the dipper from her trembling fingers and laid it down. The other hand moved deliberately along the stove front, turning off the burners one by one.

The tail of her blouse was still out, and he picked at the edges of it, pulled back, and came at it again until Edna was ready to scream. Standing so close up behind her she could feel his breath down her neck, he yet held back, waiting, just brushing at her here and there. It was like he had run up against Ira's words, "A good woman doesn't need any protection—," and was held off by them.

With a sudden savage impatience, Edna turned and threw herself against him, as if her body were a fist to strike him. Cleve grunted softly, and grabbed her.

When Edna broke away from him finally, she turned and ran into the little bedroom. Cleve followed quickly and shut the door behind him.

He had not taken two steps toward the waiting Edna when the outer door banged open and a boy's voice shrilled excitedly: "Mom! Hey, Mom!"

Rapid footsteps pounded through the kitchen and into the front part of the house. "Lookut the big fish I caught!—Mom?"

Even as Edna darted past Cleve to the door she found her eyes

going back to him; knew that his caught-out furious expression was repeated like a snarl on her own face. But by the time he came out onto the back porch where she sat with Buddy admiring the ten-inch bullhead flopping about on the dry boards she had worked herself back to a smile. "He looked pretty silly," she told herself, "panting after me into the bedroom that way when all in the world I went in for was to straighten up Buddy's bed."

From her post beside Buddy she looked up at Cleve and mocked him silently: "You should see yourself now, Cleve McKinzie, with your heels dragging and your face a yard long. You make a pretty picture, you do."

While Cleve's face went red with anger, she exclaimed aloud, "Just look at Buddy's big fish."

Cleve grunted.

"I went right where you told me to," the boy said proudly.

"In the middle of a hot afternoon, too." Edna's look ridiculed all Cleve's careful plans: parking down by the bridge where it wouldn't matter if his car was seen; waiting till he saw Bryan out of the way; sneaking up in back by the lane; sending Buddy away so they would be sure to be alone. Most of all, sending Buddy off to fish at the unlikeliest time of day for fishing. "Who ever would have thought they'd be biting?" Edna laughed softly in his face—she couldn't help herself.

Cleve's look was full of hate. He flung away to the end of the porch where he stood muttering and snarling that he didn't give a damn for all the women in the world. For a few minutes he held them in the tension of his rage, so that Buddy crept close against his mother; then he turned, smiling, and walked back to them again. "That's a fine fish you've got there, son."

"Yeah."

"You catch him on worms, did you?"

"Yeah!" Buddy straightened up, grinning proudly. "Yeah, and right where you said, too."

Cleve shook his head in admiration. "Well now. That's really something—to catch a bullhead on worms in the heat of the day. You never know how things will turn out, do you? Sometimes," he said, with a flick of a glance at Edna, "sometimes you set out and

everything's just right, and you bait your hook just so, and maybe you even get a good nibble, but—" he shrugged and spread his empty hands—"no fish. When that happens there's not much to do but give up and go home. So—"

He turned, and then as if struck by something, turned back, frowning, and stared down at the gaping fish. "You know. He sure reminds me of somebody, but I can't think who. Doesn't he look like somebody you know, Buddy?"

The boy threw off his mother's hand and bent eagerly over the fish. His closeness set it to flopping weakly and with a solemn, pop-eyed look of duty it used up the last of its strength, and lay with its wide flat mouth going open and shut, the four sharp barbels around it wagging like fantastic whiskers.

"Mr. Wilkinson!" Buddy shrieked.

Cleve seemed struck by this, and he tipped his head and considered it soberly. Then he nodded. "Mr. Wilkinson, for a fact."

Suddenly he threw back his head and whooped aloud. It was half way between a laugh and a yell, and he sent it ringing out across the silent farmyard until the drowsing chickens stirred fussily and clucked at the disturbance. Afterwards Edna was to remember that best: the corn all around, silent and dark in the dead heat of the afternoon, and Cleve with his body stretched tall and arched back a little, throwing out his godless "Hey-ya!"

He caught her look on him and he held it, the way he always could, and he shook his head at her, his smile as knowing as ever. One foot went out slowly and nudged the white, heaving belly of the fish. "Well," he said, grinning, "enjoy him."

He walked off whistling, moving in the way that took a woman's eyes, and Edna stared after him long after he was out of sight and only his whistle came back through the orderly rows of corn. "Mom?" said Buddy.

She did not answer, and after a puzzled moment the boy put his hand on her arm, and pulled for attention. "Mom?"

"What?"

Her voice was sharp. He sensed a strangeness there, a carelessness toward him he was not at all used to, and he fought it with a sure instinct. "Mom, why doesn't Mr. McKinzie give a damn about

women?"

"Buddy Conrad!"

He had her full attention now all right, and he backed up away from it, stammering a little. "Why he *said*—that's what he said."

"Don't you ever talk that way again, do you hear me? Mr. McKinzie is a bad man, do you understand? A bad man. You are not to talk to him, and if you see him on this place again you are to come and tell me—or Mr. Wilkinson."

Buddy scuffed his feet in bewilderment, and suddenly Edna reached out and hugged him so close and hard he fought to get away. "Aw, Mom, I—it's awful hot, Mom." Her yearning expression embarrassed him and he stared helplessly at his fish.

After a moment Edna stood up, smiling and brisk. "Well!" she exclaimed, "aren't you the big boy to catch a fish like that all by yourself. You didn't get hurt on the barbs, did you?"

This was more normal and Buddy breathed easier. "Naw," he said scornfully. "You just gotta—"

"We'll have him for supper, shall we? You're Mama's little man, aren't you? bringing home the meat for supper. I'll roll him in corn meal and fry him. Won't that be good? I do like a catfish once in a while. It makes a nice change—"

"—it's a bullhead—"

"—Your father used to be a great fisherman, when he had the time. I remember once he caught a fish weighed twenty pounds. But this is a fine fish, too; a great big fish for such a little boy to catch and bring home to his Mama. I tell you what let's do. Let's ask Mr. Wilkinson over to help us eat it, shall we? Won't that be fun? He likes fish, I know he does. And you can tell him all about how you caught it. My, that'll be lots of fun, won't it, Buddy?"

She broke off and stared at the corn and at the empty lane, and while Buddy was twisting his head around to see what she was looking at, she suddenly turned and squeezed his shoulders hard with both her hands. "You'd *better* enjoy it," she said fiercely.

The Power of Rain

MOSHE SHAMIR

A DRILL lies idle in the yard. In the shed, a field-worker chews at a straw. The slits of his eyes are looking for the half-obliterated trademark on the drill, as he muses over the chunks of mud clinging hard to its wheels. The rain pours down in endless torrents, the trees are crouched beneath its weight, and the yard is a tumult of rills and brooks.

When we started to sow, the autumn was still in its infancy. You could still find gleanings in the vineyard on your way home in the evening, and your cap would be full of purple-black "Hamburg-Muscat" or saffron-ripe "Beirutian-Date" vintage. Nor is there any need to mention the apples. The mornings were chilly and the dawns flamed like bright new "Diesels". . . The diesel-tractors crawled along dragging giant discus ploughs, like suns in their wake, and you figured you would be able to set the last seed down into the earth while the heavens were still their usual blue. But the cynics in the bunch would wipe the grime and oil off their hands, stuff the rags into the tool-chests, and pronounce: This year—it's drought! So let me live! There won't be any rain,—depend on an old field-hand!

And now the drills were idling in the yard beneath the heavy downpour.

The rain came after three days of Hamsin. An ill wind from the east had withered the vines. The fields in their furrows had seemed more sombre than ever, but the stubble had blazed with fiolden flames. On the last evening, lightning sprinted all along the horizon, and it awoke gaping with its great eyes.

In the yard, there was still the usual banter: Lightning will fork for a fortnight, but rain there will never be!

It began at night. The warm heavy drops struck the tin roofs like hail. The coops were aflutter, the animals in the stable tugged at their chains, and in the kitchen, the night guards crowded and

listened.

- What are we going to do about the sowing?
- And you call this rain!
- Take it from me, we'll be sowing tomorrow.
- We didn't even get to the hay.
- Just a drop of moisture, that's all.
- Stop laughing!
- Aw, nerts!

The cat arched its back above the dishes and its tail went swishing into the cups piled between the basins. Lightning flashed in at the window and thunder exploded over the yard. The rain increased. Restless the field-workers tossed in their beds. Little thoughts kept annoying them as imps in the night. But the smart-ones smiled and slept on:

—It was no calamity. Nothing at all. At least, not to be wakened in the morning. For once, to sleep like a human being!

Yet in another room, a field-worker was doing some heavy thinking:

—In the afternoon, we may be able to continue. How much can really fall?

The watchmen said to each other:

- Five millimetres, — that's all I give it.
- Much more than that.
- Listen, man, take it from me!

The cat was afraid to step outside.

The dining-hall in the morning was booted. The rain coats were glistening wet and caps were removed with a groan to beat out the water. The hall gushed and clattered. Everyone stood around, no one venturing into the rain. By this hour of the morning, the floor was honourably staked with mud, and the work-organizers had attracted vociferous crowds about them, as if they were street-demonstrating. They portioned out overdue "Sabbaths"—it was "crazy" to work out on such a day!

There was a lively mood all around: everyone pushing, everyone busy and engaging others, everyone finding interest in everybody and everything. Clusters hung on to the morning newspapers. The wits in the crowd pestered the women on kitchen-duty, guzzled

immeasurable quantities of tea and devoured bakeries of bread and margarine.

—Hey, men, who's off to bed? Forward, march!

And the rain persisted. At first, it was a joke. Then towards evening, it stopped, but immediately started up again, dripping and dropping like someone who wanted to stop, but couldn't. It trickled and drizzled all through the night, and by morning, there was a total of thirty millimetres. Laugh, laugh, comrade,—but here was no joke. Without a few days of blazing hot sun, there could be no sowing.

—We'll go down to the vegetables in the rain— what's this namby-pambying!

—Come what will, we've got to get the manure down to the orchard. It's steaming! Yes, whichever way it is, pal, winter's come to stay, so take it on the chin!

But the field-workers bided their time beneath the sheds, munching straws between their teeth, and gazing at the drills out in the rain. Their world had gone topsy-turvy. That solid, dusty tradition with the odour of meal and bins,—it had all gone by the board. Go then, ask ye the necromancers and soothsayers! Sowing should be done with drills: that was the way of the world, and there was no questioning. It was known—so many and so many dunams from dawn to sunset. And there was a particular way to drive the tractor so that the seeds would come pouring out in regulated quantities, in a slow and steady stream which the happy earth would gently open to receive, and gently close to contain.

Then, all of a sudden,—this! All right, say—"Bukkers," use "Bukkers." But first of all, let the damn rain stop!

The wadis swelled. Our own wadi went crazy-mad. By the end of autumn it had been as dry and cracked as an old hag. Lizards had rustled in its weeds, and its small stones were all powdered by the sun. The rain had come and made it human once more. It had been injected with exuberance, and streams. Yet its waters still flowed in measure-fulls. It was only the first rain.

Then came an intermission. One night the skies cleared and hung burning star-fruits on their colossal breasts. The morning was pale blue. Suspended lakes of white mist floated above the

Emek and steam smoked from the gullies. The field-workers rode out on their mares to examine the fields. The drainage canals were flooded and in some places they were overflowed. The upturned sod had absorbed great quantities of water and become soft and boggy. The mares were nervous and sought the hard ground for their hoofs. But when the field-men returned to the yard, all was clarified: it would take a week at least. And even then, who could vouch for us being able to mount the fields with our heavy drills.

We might really have to complete the job with the "Bukkers." That was double the work, double the nerves, and double the heart-ache for each man.

And all this, mind you, only if there was no more rain, if everything remained well, and luck were with us.

In less than a week, the rain was back. The wadi was a savage beast. Where it entered the woods, a rising lake eddied day and night. The watchmen could hear it above the roar of the forest in the wind, above the rapping of the hail on the corrugated tin roofs. Old willows stood at the spot, and their trunks creaked with the mighty gallop of the waters.

Further ahead the wadi dropped into a narrow channel. Thorny, thick blackberry bushes had formed a canopy over it, and you could hear the thunder of the waters from within. Eternally green pines babbled around the wadi, and cypress bordered the verdant trails along its banks. After the rain, the live, naked green earth-flesh went down to the wadi, stroked its banks, and sent long tongues into the stream.

The waters of the wadi are dark and murky. They carry within them the far, cold wind of hills, the bit of dutsy earth which may have come to rest upon their rocks in the autumn, the finely powdered residue of dried stalks, cast-off skins of snakes, odours of goats on pasture, and droppings of herds from Ein-a-Tina and Ein-a-Shih.

At the point where the tall eucalyptus grow in a clump, the wadi widens, its flow becomes gentler, and the banks are clear of weeds. Trails come down to meet it, and there is a reed bower built over the stream which then drops broadly and good-naturedly down

a fall. From thence onward, the wadi enters the "bustan" of Abu-Shusha, and making a sudden turn, skips foamingly down to the road. It passes beneath the highway through a concrete uniform, and leaping, laps the plowed earth of the plum orchard, the long beds of clover, and the still barren crop-fields, falling finally into the Kishon. And when the wadi thunders the rain does too, and when the rain thunders, the wadi follows suit, and they are, in fact, brothers in compassion to the field-workers.

And so it is,—a field-worker stands biting his straws in the shed, while opposite him, the drills and "bukkers" rust in the rain, and in the stable, the champing beasts kick at their stalls with impatience.

Then, lo and behold, the rain left for a journey in the hills. Field-workers are an optimistic race. If we can't get on to the fields with tractors, they say, we'll mount with animals. They dress up the "bukkers" with long new poles and solid new iron rings. The chains clank when they lead the horses over for the rial. If the rain didn't return, if it wasn't back in a day and a second day, then, God be willing, they would get on to the fields. They would mobilize all the teams. They would call off the manuring of the orchards. They would see to it that there was less carting done around the yard. The cut clover would be hauled home by tractors. And they were going to sow. O, comrades, they were going to sow!

The third rain came. It arrived at noon. It darkened the face of the day and swept violently and cruelly. Instead of going out to work, again we gulped tea in the dining-hall. We jammed the showers, went to our rooms and curled beneath our blankets to read poetry about the beauties of life. We roasted potatoes.

Day darkened and fell into the dusk. The rain raged without a let-up. It made our discouragement the soddener, blackened it and buried it in mud.

"Kabir" was dying in the stable. A field-worker was standing by, the straw still stuck between his teeth. The broad hind of "Kabir" shivered with fever. The head was limp, the legs, stiff and paralysed from poisoning. His beautiful head would suddenly tremble and jerk from side to side, and his distended eyes were

drowned with tears. On the front knee was black infected wound. The field-worker stood by and watched the horse die. "Kabir" was the horse for field work. You could team him up with anyone, and it was enough to have him around to be assured that the work would run with the smoothness of honey.

Now he was beyond repair. Now he could only sink away and die in silence. Who would see his death? All were couched up in their beds or playing in the Reading Room, or complaining to each other about the chill in their bones. Who would do the sowing now? Who would cover ten of dunams a day? Who would be the first to neigh when the stable was near, or at the sight of the gate, and with the swift lash of the teamsters?

This was nice. Here was a field-worker becoming sentimental, standing helplessly and watching the dying "Kabir," and the damn rain was falling, falling.

When the field-worker would go out in the rain, all would be heavily dark. Two stubborn thoughts would cling to him as he waddled through the mire: one, that by morning, "Kabir" will be lying frozen on his black bed of straw, and two, that the sowing would have to be done by hand, that there would be sowing even if they had to be buried with each seed.

That they would sow!

The winter was bad. It gulped down many a curse, but worst of all was the ponderous, private swearing of the "fellahim" the field workers. There were great sighs of oaths, and they escaped from the lowest depths of the chest as they emerged from the recesses of their heavy leather coats.

Beneath the thin drizzle of rain stood a field-laborer orating.

—Who spits at the rain, tell me,—who doesn't give a damn how it pours? I'll tell you: They! And he points to the Abu-Shusha village and its fields.

Who have already done with their sowing, tell me?—They who doesn't give a damn and can even sow today?—They.

—Now, why? Tell me why. Because they plough with animals and sow by hand. Because they till their soil in such a manner that no calamity, not even the moon falling, can prevent them from

plowing and sowing, reaping and threshing in the old way.

—Why, tell me, why can't we have the same thing? Right in the rain, why can't we go out sowing tomorrow? Today!

(It's like a theatre. The fellow is really excited and the crowd of leather jackets is all ears.)

—Now don't go asking me; All right, how do you do it? We'll sow by hand, I tell you, we'll plow and cover the seed with animals! So let me tell you this now: I'm going to harness and go out sowing. Either come along, or don't. I'm fed up.

The idea was born with the first clear day. It was a simple idea, but ingenious—no less than the first clear day itself. That's why it was born. It was impossible to stand it any longer, to see the world in its splendour and beauty, and idle around with folded hands.

And so, it was going to be work by hand! We were going to get everyone out to the fields, get all the draft animals, and mobilize help. Help from whom? Are there field labourers in Aretz who know the art of sowing by hand!

We arrayed three horses in their gayest holiday outfit, and rode into Abu-Shusha. Ever since the sowing was over, there was not a night without a wedding in that village, not a day without a feast, not a hovel without smoke.

And so we spoke to them thuswise: come, take your ploughs out of the storehuts, harness your horses and give us a helping hand. And we, when spring comes, will do your plowing for you with our big tractors and their huge ploughs, every plade of which is worth a cow. Let the right hand give and the left hand receive, and may God bless our deeds.

This is what we told them too: You see how our fields have become bogs. You see how we still haven't sown, and how there will be no bread for our little ones. How will we sow?—they said. Handful by handful, and the arm will do the swinging!—And who will do it?—Who is like unto you among the sowers of the Emek? And our beasts are few, our good horse has died. Aye, the white one, he, he.

"Inshallah," may Allah be willing, and perhaps nice days will come. They'll be fine for sowing by hand, and the fields won't be

tramped hard by the light horses. We will sow, for we must sow, and in spring we'll do your plowing!

"Alhamdelillah." Allah was gracious, and the days were pleasant. Even before the sun was up, the fellhin would assemble with their horses at the gate. Coming out of the stable with our fattened mules and horses and with the tractor bearing the seeds in the van, we could hardly discern them in the greyness and cold. When we came close to the gate, we would see them standing waiting on the road, every man leaning on his horse and a narrow little wooden plough propped alongside. Usually, a cold morning blast blew, and the horses would whinny in terror of the approaching roar of the tractor. We would send the machine on ahead and then come over to the crowd. Greetings of good morning would resound in congregation and there would be a general hubbub. We would fasten the horses, two at each wagon, and lifting up the light ploughs, help the plowmen and sowers up, adjusting the straw bales to make room for everyone, and then, veyoh-lah, we would go galloping away to the fields.

We were late in sowing, but we did sow with verve and gusto. We sowed everything we had missed, down to the hay. We divided the fields and made a unified assault on many sections at once. And this was the law of the sowing: a line of sowers would move ahead in a swinging motion; behind them, another line of sowers, and after them, the teams plowing and again sowers and again plowers and so on.

The fields were good and soft, and little grass had sprouted. The heavy grains falling on the fields turned it into a carpet studded with gold. So it was until the ploughs came along, turning the seeds and covering them with moist earth which glittered and sparkled as winks of affection or hints of longing.

The tractor-man who would haul the seeds and carry lunch for the workers at noon, stood by amazed, unwilling to believe his eyes. For our lands, which had already forgotten the meaning of an ordinary plough, which had seemed from the beginning of time to have moaned beneath the colossal blades of "Polydiscs" and "Deerings,"—these lands now lay prone on their back, delighted by the chill of this forgotten tickling.

Nevertheless, the sowing made progress. From time to time, sowers drove over to the tractor in their light carts to take back a load of seed. Opening the sacks, they would weigh the good grain for the thousandth time in the palm of their hand, toss it up lightly, looking now at the grain, now at the man on the tractor and think: what glorious seed! Can you call this seed,—why, a loaf of bread, that's what each grain is.

The tractor man content, "mabsut." He would suddenly snort mightily with his machine, make a wide detour of the horses, and return home for more seed. Matters were rolling now, moving fast. . . .

The village was wild with enthusiasm, and so was Abu-Shusha. Old-time field-hands who had once sown by hand in old Kinnereth of Mikveh Israel, put aside all sorts of urgent duties, and for a few days at least, took their turn in the fields. At first they were still hesitant, and the Arab fellahin would correct their clumsy movements amidst peals of laughter, but soon they got into stride, and the sweep of their arm became broader and more certain.

And the weather was fine, one day better than the other, clearer, bluer. In the yard the usual wits still said: just another day or two and we could have mounted the fields with our tractors without all this commotion.

In the evening we would return with all the excitement of a "fantasiyah." The wagons would jig and trot along in the bustle of high spirits. The horses, in the excitement, would kick in their traces, the teamsters would swish with their whips "ve-yoh-lah," and the youngsters, theirs and ours, would sing boisterously without stopping all the way home.

We would leave by night and return by night. The accounts would be made later on beneath warm quilts, when the seeds were quilted too. When the sprouting would begin, then we could rest. When the young shoots would stand firmly, then we too could stand around. When the ears would be formed, we could doze, but when they bent with their gold, then, once again we would return to our labours with tightened belt.

The fields lay wide and black after the plowers had crossed. In the morning, they glittered in face of the rising sun, and in the

evening, when they turned blue and green, you almost caught them in the process of sprouting.

But then, the fourth rain came. It fell at noon, We had been waiting for it from early morning, yet we did not stop. We went out and sowed, and we were near the finish. When the first drops hit us, and the crawling tatters of clouds began to bank up over the entire Emek, the sowers began to wriggle their arms as if they had St. Vitus. But sowing was sowing, and it needs rhythm. If you run, you can't sow. The animals tried to break and run amuck, but the drivers tightened their muscles, bit at their tongues, and subdued them. We continued with the sowing until the blades of the ploughs were sticky, until the horses kept slipping, and the field was a bog. Only then did we run to the wagons, harness and bolt for home. It was pouring buckets. The rain came driving into the faces of the horses, and they were in a rage. The wagons filled with mud and water, and we were soaked to the marrow of our bones. We remained standing in the cart leaning upon each other. Throwing our heads toward heavens, we roared our shout of victory.

For all purposes—said a field-worker,—pinching the inevitable straw between his fingers—for all purposes, we've done with the sowing.

When we came home, we didn't drop the Abu-Shusha fellahin off as usual, nor loose their horses, but the whole procession continued its gallop full speed into the yard. All the animals went to the stable, and we, to the machine shed.

So, there we stood, a mob of wet farmers listening to the thunder of the rain on the roof. We were still and intent.

It was then that I saw one of the fellahin, a sower, son-of-the-son-of-a-sower, an old neighbour of ours from Abu-Shusha, go over to one of the giant ploughs whose blades standing out in the rain, were as huge as plates of metal. He was examining it closely. It was outside of the shed, and he was standing, therefore, in the rain, hair plastered to his brow, "abbayeh" dripping-wet.

He came closer to the plough, fingered its solid steel structure and then turned with reverence to stroke the big blades.

While he did so, he smiled, as if remembering about the spring-plowing.

The Swimming Race

BENJAMIN TAMMUZ

ONE HOT SUMMER'S DAY, many years ago, I was sitting in the kitchen of our home, staring out of the window. From the floor, paved with red squares of clay, I absorbed the chill into my bare feet. My elbows were propped upon the linoleum tablecloth, my eyes roaming outside. The stillness of the afternoon pervaded the room, and a dreamy peace filled my heart.

Suddenly the sound of galloping horses came from the other end of the road, and a black Arab cab of the sort that used to ply on the roads before automobiles became so numerous—the kind we used to hire when we drove to the Railway Station in Jaffa, to travel to Jerusalem, to Grandmother, for Passover—approached.

The horses came closer and halted outside the door of our house. The driver alighted and knocked. I sprang up to open the door for him and the smell of must and horses and places far-away door for him and the smell of musk and horses and places far-away prevailed in the kitchen. The shoulders of the driver barred the light and did not permit the heat to intrude.

He held out a letter and handed it to me. I glanced at it and saw that it was written in French, which I could not read. My mother came in and took the letter and her face brightened. She invited the driver in and placed before him a slice of cold melon and fresh *pitta*. The Arab put his whip against the wall, blessed the work of my mother's hands, sat down at the table and munched the melon. The sound of his lips filled the air.

My mother told me that the letter had come from the old Arab woman, who lived in the orange orchard, that she was now well and that she had been cured by the hands of my mother which she kissed from afar. She also wrote that it being summer and as she had heard that our holidays were approaching, my mother would certainly be able to take leave of her other patients and come with her son to stay in the house in the orchard.

As we left the house and took our places in the carriage the sun was about to set in the sea. The driver folded back the curved leather roof and we sank into the deep, soft seats. Immediately I was filled with the sense of places remote, and of travel. The Arab climbed up to his high seat, whistled to his horses and flourished his whip in the air. The springs creaked beneath us, the seats subsided and then rose again like waves on the sea, and a whinny of leave-taking cut the air. The wheels of the carriage began to move, rumbling over the rutted road, giving vent to a melody of joy and event.

Soon we passed the Hassan Bek Mosque and entered the alleys of Manshieh. The aroma of cooking greeted us, and waves of *zatr*, of roast mutton, fried egg-plant and mint-spiced salad, drenched us in turn. The voice of the driver filled the air, sounding a warning to the right and the left, urging peddlars to move out of the way, scolding the children who sprawled in the middle of the road. The horses beat a gay, rhythmic tattoo, moving their shiny, brown rumps, and the horse on the right raised its tail as it trotted and dropped its dung. The driver turned his face towards us and from his lofty seat threw us a smile of apology, remarking that horses were shameless and ill-mannered creatures and that we must pardon them.

We jolted along pleasantly, restfully, in our seats until we left the city behind us and the horses began to draw the carriage heavily upon a road of red sand, lined with cactus hedges and acacias. A shimmering heat rose heavily from the soil and huddled close to us upon the cool seat. The sun, it seemed, had already dipped into the sea, for from beyond the orchards came the crimson glow of burning skies. A chill gloom came down about us and suddenly the horses stopped to make water in the sand together.

Once again the cab moved forward. A tremor shook the side of the horses and under their hooves appeared a stretch of road, paved with *kurkur* and bordered on both sides with cypresses. Just then we espied a whitewashed, stone archway, supporting a large, closed wooden gate, in which was set a small wicket. Beside the wicket stood a girl of my own age, wearing a white frock and with a pink ribbon plaited into her hair. As the carriage approached

the gate, the girl sprang up and fled inside. The driver said, "We have arrived."

Today we do not see such courtyards. If you should happen to come upon a place where once there was one like it, you will find the ruins of a wall, mounds of rubble and rafters covered with cobwebs that lend an air of age to what only yesterday breathed and laughed.

But at that time this courtyard was in good repair and pulsed with life. It was square in shape, and surrounded on three sides by a two-storeyed building. Below were the stables and barns, while in the yard roamed black and red hens, whose cackling mingled with the neighing of the horses. On the second floor was the pump-room near it a reservoir into which a pipe leading from the pump poured its water. Goldfish would come up close to the pump, splashing in the air bubbles created by the flow of the water. A wooden balcony adorned the long veranda that was always in the shadow. A coloured glass door led into the hall lined with many doors, opening upon the living rooms, the kitchens, and the stores.

A long table, around which were placed upholstered armchairs covered with white linen dust-covers, stood in the middle of the room. But on the day we came the covers had been removed and folded in neat layers in a corner.

Clay vases, painted red and gold, filled with large paper roses and lilies, unlike any flowers that I had ever seen, stood in the room. One vase there was whose paint had faded long before. It was like a vase that had been bought many years ago upon the wedding-day of the old woman, the mistress of the house.

Out of the gilded, wooden frames on the walls stared the faces of men wearing tarbushes and girded with swords. The old woman led my mother to one of the pictures and said, "This is my husband, his rest be in Paradise. It was his father who built this house. Now we live here during the summer and in the winter return to Jaffa."

My mother sighed and replied, "My husband, too, is no longer alive, but his house and his father's house are not here. Everything has remained overseas and I live in a rented dwelling, both in summer and in winter."

The old woman replied, "You are newcomers here, immigrants,

but with God's aid you will prosper and build yourselves houses. You are very diligent and your hands are blessed."

My mother was sensitive to the inference and returned a look of gratitude. But at that moment my mouth opened and I said, "But it is not true that we are driving out the Arabs. We seek peace and not war."

The old woman laid her hand on my head, saying, "All is according to the man. Whoever seeks peace, will live in peace."

Just then the little girl returned, to stand in the doorway.

"Come here, Nahida," the old woman said. "Kiss the hand of the *hakima*, who has cured your grandmother. This boy is her son."

Nahida walked diffidently from the door and stood before my mother. My mother embraced her and kissed her on the cheek, and a flush was kindled in the swarthy features of the girl. She hung her head and was silent.

"Our Nahida is shy," the old woman replied. "But her heart is good!"

Nahida tucked up the skirt of her white dress and seated herself in the arm-chair. We all followed suit as if now that the most honoured among us had taken her seat, we could do likewise.

The old woman made some remark in French and my mother laughed. Once again a flush suffused Nahida's cheeks, and I saw that she was eyeing me to see whether I understood French.

I said to her, "I don't understand anything. What are they saying?"

"My grandmother says that you and I could make a couple."

"Nonsense!" I answered and stared at the floor.

"Go and play," the old woman said. "We shall not disturb you."

I rose and, in the wake of Nahida went to the veranda. We sat by the edge of the pool.

"Do you believe in God?" I asked her. "I don't at all."

"I do. And I have a place in the orchard where I pray. If we become friends, I'll take you to it and I'll show you that there is a God."

"Do you fast in the month of Ramadan? I eat even on Yom Kippur."

"I do not fast because I am still too young. Do you rest on the

Sabbath?"

"It depends," I answered. "If I have nothing better to do, I rest. Not because there is a God, but just so."

"But I love God," said Nahida.

"Then we cannot be a couple until you stop believing."

Nahida wanted to reply, but at that moment we heard the sound of the wicket opening, and two men appeared in the courtyard. Nahida rushed towards them, twining her arms round the neck of one who wore a tarbush and was dressed in European clothes.

"Father, we have visitors," she cried.

"I know," her father replied. "The doctor has come to visit us."

I rose from my seat and waited for them to ascend to the pool. The second person, a young man of about eighteen, wearing a *keffiyeh* and *egal*, was Nahida's uncle, her father's brother. He came up first, holding out his hand to greet me. Nahida's father stroked my cheek and drew me after him into the house.

Supper was served on the veranda. In large dishes fried potatoes, sliced eggplant in tomato-juice and cubes of salted cheese, appeared. In another dish there were pomegranates and small water melons. A pile of warm *pittas* was heaped up in the centre of the table.

Abdul Karim, Nahida's uncle, asked me if I was a member of the Hagana. I replied that it was a secret. He laughed and said that it was an open secret and known to everyone in the country.

"Abdul Karim is studying at the College of the Mufti," Nahida's father told us. "And he is in constant fear of your Hagana."

Abdul Karim's features darkened and he remained silent. But the old woman, his mother, laid her hand upon his arm, saying, "My Abdul Karim is good and faithful. Do not tease him!"

Abdul Karim kissed the hand of his aged mother and did not reply. At that moment a sheep-dog, with tangled hair, appeared on the veranda. It showed its way under the table, squeezing among the veranda. It shoved its way under the table, squeezing among the many feet, seeking some place to lie down. Finally it ceased its circuit, placing its head upon Nahida's feet and licking them. It laid its tail on my legs, and when it wagged it, tickled me. I smiled because of the tickling and turned towards Nahida to

explain to her why I was laughing. But I saw that she took my smile for a mark of friendship, and I was silent.

After supper, Nahida's father said to his brother:

"Abdul Karim, my brother, go and show the children what you have brought from the city."

Abdul Karim rose signalling to Nahida and myself to follow. He entered the store in the orchard and brought out a shining shotgun. "Tomorrow we shall go and hunt rabbits," he said. "Can you shoot?"

"A little," I replied. "Let us compete in target-shooting if you wish."

"Last week," remarked Nahida, "we arranged a swimming match here in the pool, and my uncle beat them all."

"If you wish," I said, "we can compete in swimming too."

"*Ahalan we-sahalan!*" consented Abdul Karim. "Tomorrow morning then. Meanwhile let us go back to the house and hear some songs. We have a gramophone."

We returned and went up to the house. Abdul Karim put on a record, turned the handle and attached the horn. We heard the strumming of a *kamanji* and a drum and cymbils, and immediately afterwards the strains of an Arab song, sweet and plaintive, floating in tremolos of melody. Abdul Karim sat at his ease in his arm-chair and his face shone. When one record was completed, he replaced it with another, though to me it seemed that it was the same song that we had already heard. Time and again it was repeated until I became bored and slipped out to the other room where my mother and the old woman were chatting. But there, too, I was bored, so I went out onto the veranda, from where I stared onto the pool and the orchard behind it. A large moon hovered over the trees and from the pool rose the chill of the water. Some night-bird nearby emitted a cry, but when the gramophone was silent, it was too. A yawn escaped me and I thought regretfully of my friends in the suburb who were now roasting potatoes in the fire under the electric pylon, and stealing wood from the sausage factory nearby. Why had I come here, I asked myself.

Nahida discovered a strange way of waking me from my sleep in the morning. They had a large, fat cat in the house. Nahida

rose and placed it on my face while I still slept, and I sprang out of the bed. I took the cat and threw it into her lap and thus we entered upon my second day in the orchard. As I stood rubbing my eyes, Abdul Karim came into the kitchen and said, "What about our swimming race in the pool?"

"I am ready," I answered.

We finished our meal hurriedly. I took my bathing costume and went outside. My mother, the old woman and Nahida's father placed seats for themselves by the balcony, close to the pool, to watch the race.

"One, two, three," Nahida cried, and I and Abdul Karim dived into the water. Whether it was because of my excitement or because I was not used to fresh water, I sank like a stone to the bottom of the pool and before I could recover and float upwards, Abdul Karim was already in the centre. I saw my mother bending over the balcony calling out to me, "Don't be afraid! Swim quickly!" And I began to swim. But it was useless. Before I had got to the pipe leading out from the pump, Abdul Karim was already sitting on the other side on the railing, squeezing the water out of his hair.

"You have beaten me in the pool," I said to him, "but we can compete in something else if you wish."

"In what?" asked Abdul Karim.

"In arithmetic, for instance."

"Why not?" he replied and told Nahida to bring paper and a pencil.

Nahida did his bidding. I took the sheet of paper, tore it into two halves and on each I wrote seven million nine hundred and eighty-four thousand, six hundred and twenty-eight multiplied by four million nine hundred and eighty-six thousand, seven hundred and fifty-nine.

"We'll see who can get the answer first," I said.

Abdul Karim took a pencil and sat down at the table. I, too, began my calculation. I finished before he did and handed the sheet to Nahida's father to check. I had made a mistake. Abdul Karim, too, presented his paper. It transpired that he too had erred.

"Then let us compete in general knowledge," I proposed to Abdul Karim. "For instance, who discovered America?"

"Columbus," replied Abdul Karim.

"That is not correct," I said. "It was Amerigo Vespucci, after whom it is called America!"

"He beat you!" Nahida cried out to her uncle. "You see! He beat you!"

"He beat me in America," said Abdul Karim, "but I beat him here in the pool."

"One day when I grow up, I'll beat you here in the pool, too!" I replied.

Nahida almost nodded in assent but stopped herself in time and looked at her uncle to see what he would say.

"If he will beat me here in the pool too," said Abdul Karim, "it will be very bad. Even for you, Nahida, it will be very bad. For all of us!"

I did not understand what he was talking about and wanted to tell him not to philosophize. But I did not know how to say it in Arabic, so I remained silent. Afterwards we went out to hunt rabbits in the orchard.

II

Many years had passed and once again summer had come. Tired, and weary of the work of the year, I sought some place where I could spend a fortnight's leisure. I packed a small suitcase and set out for Jerusalem. But I could not secure accommodation in any boarding-house in the city so after a harassing quest I took my seat in an automobile going to the Arab village of Ein Karem. As I sat in the car I began to ponder what I would do there and why, indeed, I was going there at all.

At the end of the main road there was an arched building, from the floor of which a fountain bubbled. Opposite it on a spur of the hill, rising towards the Russian Monastery, under the shade of some sycamores, low wooden stools were scattered. Upon them men sat, sipping coffee and puffing at their *nargillehs*. I approached and seated myself. The waiter came up to me and enquired what I would have. I asked him, "Perhaps you know of some family here that will consent to give me lodging for a fortnight?"

"I do not know," replied the lad. "But perhaps the proprietor

does."

The proprietor came to see who I was.

"A family with whom you can lodge?"

"To rest," I told him. "I am tired and want a place to rest."

"And how much will you pay?" he asked.

"As much as is required," I replied.

The man ordered the lad to go to the house of one Abu Nimr by name.

After a brief interval the boy returned. "Go up! Abu Nimr is willing."

I took my case and made my way up the slope of the hill. As I walked I wondered what had induced me to come here. I entered the courtyard and knocked at the door of the house. A tall, bald Arab, of about forty-five came out and said, "Welcome, come inside!"

I followed him down a long, cool passage, and was brought to a small room, entirely filled by a high, broad bed.

"If this place suits you, may you be blessed," said Abu Nimr.

"It is very good," I said. "How much will it cost?"

"I do not know," he replied. "That my wife will tell you." And he went out of the room.

I unpacked my case and sat upon the bed. Immediately I sank into the soft eiderdown, which came up to my elbows. There was a perfumed stillness all about and out of it came familiar smells of frying oil, of mint leaves, of black coffee, rose water and *heil*. I felt a smile suffuse my face and my ears strained for a sound that was wanting, to complete an ancient, blurred memory.

Suddenly a tap was opened in the kitchen and the flush of pouring water made me hold my breath—the pipe discharging its water into the pool!

I rose and went out into the courtyard and I found no pool, not even orange trees, but about the apple and the plum trees there was something of that specific quality of strangeness of such trees in an Arab household. It was apparent that the courtyard had not been created at one time, that every generation had added its mite. One had planted the apple-tree by the tap, another a mulberry-tree by the dog's kennel, and in the course of the years the garden rose

to relate the annals of its masters. I stood listening intently. My fantasy was peopling the courtyard with Nahida and her grandmother and Abdul Karim and the carriage which all of a sudden would come to a halt by the gate and its horses would urinate.

In the evening I was invited to eat at the family table and Abu Nimr introduced me to those who sat about it—his round-faced, energetic wife, who smiled into the void of the room, without lifting her eyes up to me, his two sons, one thirteen, the other fifteen years of age, students of the College in the City, and his white-skinned, plump-limbed daughter, married to a policeman, who was away from home all the week and who, when he returned, brought a wickerbasket, in which were a trussed-dove, apples from Bethar, and a dozen eggs requisitioned from some villager who chanced to be in the police station.

What was served at the table was no more than a continuation of that distant supper in the orchard. At that moment I knew what I had sought here.

After the meal the strains of some Arab song rose from the gramophone, and Abu Nimr asked me if I could show his sons how to use an English typewriter which he had bought the day before in the City. I sat down to instruct the youngsters who approached their task with a tremendous awe, while their father and mother stood close-by, their hearts brimful with pride. We spent a long time at our occupation until the mother came and brought me a cup of sweet cocoa, and asked me to rest a while. The melody from the gramophone continued, and as I sipped from the glass, the voice of Nahida filled my ears, and the features of Abdul Karim rose before me. And out of the gloom in the passage came the hum of the conversation of my mother and the old woman. Then I knew that throughout all those years I had waited for this moment, that the days of our sojourn in the orchard should recur. I closed my eyes and to myself I said, "Will I ever see you again, little Nahida, and Abdul Karim, victor of the pool?"

Again years passed. We were in the throes of the war between ourselves and the Arabs. I was serving in a company drawn up to

attack Tel-Arish, in the sands of Jaffa, east of the city.

Some months previously an attack had been staged there, but it had proved abortive and had cost us twenty-six lives. This time we were certain of our victory, and regarded the battle as an expedition of wrath and vengeance. At midnight we set out from Holon, and started crawling in the direction of the houses of Tel-Arish. The sand dunes concealed us effectively, and we crawled over them easily, without a sound. A breeze from the west brought with it the smell of Jaffa to our nostrils, but later the wind blew in our backs from the suburbs of Holon, wafting the odour of new houses. The sand beneath us exuded the warmth absorbed from the sun, retelling of the days of light we had known among the white houses, and of the promise of liberty and rejoicing that would return to our midst after victory.

When the Arabs saw us it was already too late. We were within grenade-range of the outpost, and we stormed it from three sides. One of our first bombs exploded in the forward machine-gun post, hitting all its crew. We charged inside, training the German machine-gun on the village. There was confusion among the Arabs and they rushed out of the houses only to be mown down by our riflemen, who lay in ambush on the two flanks from the south and the north. Only one avenue of flight remained, westwards, and it seemed that several had succeeded in slipping through in that direction, and had made good their escape into the orchard nearby—that self-same orchard, where I had spent a few days with the family of the old woman twenty years before.

I had, indeed expected things to unfold thus, for thus it had been planned. The house in the orchard was the second objective in our attack that night. We did not know if there were fighting men there, but it was clear that if we failed to destroy all those holding the position at Tel-Arish, they would find cover in the stone-building and in the courtyard to reorganize. Apparently their reserves were in the house in the orchard, for heavy fire was opened up on us from there, and other signs seemed to show that fortified positions had been prepared there in case the Tel fell.

We had no luck here, however. The battle lasted until dawn

and we lost six men. The lust for revenge which had burnt within us previously was now exacerbated. We were superior to them in numbers. Soon there were signs of weakening in the house and the fire slackened gradually. At dawn we charged into the courtyard, penetrating as far as the stables and planted a charge of high explosives. A few moments after we had withdrawn there was a mighty roll of thunder, and the wing of the house close to the pool was converted into a pile of rubble. The groans of the wounded and cries of submission came to our ears. In the courtyard we reorganized and called upon the Arabs to surrender.

When I saw Abdul Karim I was not surprised. It seemed that this too had been foretold, but this I had not dared to expect. I recognized him immediately. I went up to him and called him by name. When I told him who I was, he recollected and smiled wearily.

"Nahida—is she here too?" I asked him.

"No!" Abdul Karim replied. "She is not. The family has left Jaffa."

Some of the boys came up and listened to our conversation with astonishment.

"Do you know him?" our officer asked me.

"I do!" I replied.

"Can he give us important information?"

"Probably," I said. "But I want to settle an old account with him."

"Do you want to finish him off?" the officer asked me.

"No," I told him. "But I want to talk to him."

The boys burst out laughing, and apparently Abdul Karim who had not understood our talk felt insulted, for his hands shook with emotion.

I hastened to explain to him that I wished to talk to him alone.

"You are the victors," he said. "Whatever you order us to do, we must do!"

"As long as I have not beaten you in the pool," I told him, "no one can say who is victor."

Abdul Karim smiled. It seemed that he understood me.

Our officer, however, thought otherwise. He did not understand and gave an order to take Abdul Karim to the orchard where the prisoners were being concentrated. I went to the pool sitting on the railing. Our reinforcements from Holon and Bat-Yam began to arrive and the orderlies began to tend the wounded in the yard. I took off my clothes and entered the water. It was warm and dirty, and it was obvious that for a long time the pipe had not discharged water from the well.

I stretched out my arms and crossed the pool once or twice. I closed my eyes waiting for the voice of my mother from the railing calling out to urge me on.

"Don't be afraid! Swim quickly!"

But instead came the voice of Abdul Karim: "You beat me in America but I beat you here in the pool!"

Just then I heard a shot from the direction of the orchard. My heart stopped beating. I knew that Abdul Karim had been killed.

I leapt out of the water, grabbed my trousers and hurried to the orchard. There was some disturbance and the officer was shouting.

"Who fired that shot, devil take it!"

One of the fellows replied.

"I did."

The officer came up to me saying:

"We have lost that information, damn it! They've killed your Arab!"

"We have lost it," I repeated. Then I went up to the body of Abdul Karim and turned it over. It seemed that he saw me, a few minutes previously as I swam in the pool. His face was not that of a man who had been defeated.

Parable

CHARLES BOEWE

TOILING UP THE MOUNTAIN, the multitude overtook Decalogos as he was about to enter a cave near the summit. One cried out to him, "Speak to us of Myth." And the Prophet answered him, saying:

1. Never talk about myth when you can find another word. Paradox, ambiguity, and tension were once all sinewy terms that served a generation of critics well. Then they served another generation; the next will find them flabby. Criticism, like the Jukeses, grows worse with inbreeding.

2. Never talk about the Christian Myth at all. Talking about it will outrage the pious, inflate the foolish, and amuse the wise.

3. If you find an unclaimed myth in your nest, brood it. Perhaps she was right all along, but Henny-Penny did not greatly advance criticism by flapping off to tell the king the sky was falling in.

4. Remember that for all their longevity, myths are naturally delicate. No doubt we must murder to dissect, but there is a finesse in the scalpel unknown to the cleaver.

5. Do not congratulate yourself that your clear vision distinguishes the falsity of the myth from the truth of the fact. Did you not learn the fact from the same sources that you learned the myth?

6. Never depreciate the myth in favor of what you believe to be reality. Schliemann found the real remains of the topless towers of Ilium, but it was Helen's immortal kiss that lifted men to an *O altitudo*.

7. Treat statistics as you would any other myth.

8. A myth is to persons, things, and events as a smile is to lips.

cheeks, and eyes. Students of myth, *first* understand the Cheshire cat in *Alice in Wonderland*.

9. The myth you find in books is not the myth that once moved people to act like human beings. If you must have a necklace, be content with pearls; never try to string together the oysters.

10. When someone scoffs at your myths, recall how physics solemnly avers that matter is only bits of energy moving in nearly empty space. How now is the way of a man with a myth?

After the Prophet had passed on into the cave, there came back to the people a wondrous noise. Some said it was laughter, and some said it was only a cry of despair.

Reflections

CHARLES BLACK

Echoes are at least forthright. They tell the truth,
Though each in self-peculiar way, without
A chance of being understood. In youth
We sat at feet of echoes, told our doubt
Of chasms and valleys, listened, were assured,
Now learn in quiet. Mirrors wholly lie
(Or nearly so, if the absolute be cured
By right-left twist) but who can pass one by?
For lies hug truth, as a pool of drowning grips
The food of human breath in molecules
For electrolysis. Our finger-tips
Feel along lines of suture for the rules
Combining all that is. What truth, we ask,
Is just this lie most likely told to mask?

A Room I Once Knew

HENRY BIRNBAUM

Outside the world crackles like a daily. A lion
prowls the edges of my dream and stalks the back
and forth of my senses. I sleep in coils
while the moon streaks across the padded tympany
of my restiveness. Within the pulse of dark,
I stretch my soul over the drum and reach deep
into the hollow of crepuscular anxieties.

Let us open another door:

Here is the lamp beside the table. Here is
the kitten on the couch. Patterns of innocence
diapasoned among my childhoods. And once I sat
beneath the kitchen table, cross-legged in my own
evolution, and my love was kneaded like
a morning pastry.

Here is the same door to open:

Two sticky flies jettisoned into reality buzz their stain
about Victorian corners. The dust, like the hoarse
sound of an oboe, lies in the weariness of cardboard
boxes, hidden in thick closets and behind the virtue
of worn bedspreads. I am adult
and reflected in the eczema of tarnished mirrors.

There are simple spaces between knowledge which lie
fallow in our growth. And in that house I knew,
the animals purred their intact memories
and were received as we receive our domestic
bowls of milk. But in that room, the dust
in souvenirs grows hoarse like the roar of a lion.

Close the front door. This is
the front porch. Goodnight house.

The Humiliation of Emma Woodhouse

MARK SCHORER

JANE AUSTEN'S *Emma*, 1816, stands at the head of her achievements, and, even though she herself spoke of Emma as "a heroine whom no one but myself will much like," discriminating readers have thought the novel her greatest. Her powers here are at their fullest, her control at its most certain. As with most of her novels, it has a double theme, but in no other has the structure been raised so skillfully upon it. The novel might have been called *Pride and Perception*, or *Perception and Self-Deception*, for the comedy is concerned with a heroine who must be educated out of a condition of self-deception brought on by the shutters of pride, into a condition of perception when that pride had been humbled through the exposure of the errors of judgment into which it has led her. No novel shows more clearly Jane Austen's power to take the moral measurement of the society with which she was concerned through the range of her characters.

Morality in the novel lies not in spread but in scale, in the discrimination of values on scale and the proportion that is held between values within scale. In *Emma*, the word scale has a special meaning, for its subject is a fixed social scale in need of measurement, by moral scale. As the social scale is represented by the scene as a whole, by all the characters, so the chief characters establish, in addition, the moral scale. The story is the progress of the heroine on this second scale toward her position on the first. *Emma* gives us the picture of an externally balanced society which the novel itself readjusts, or puts in perspective, through the internal balance that is the root of moral, not social, judgment.

Can we permit the notion that Jane Austen is capable of making a moral judgment on that social world which she herself accepts and from which her novels emerge? I have argued elsewhere that our

surest way of knowing the values out of which a novel comes lies in an examination of style, more particularly, of metaphor. Jane Austen's style is, of course, remarkably non-metaphorical, if we are thinking of explicit metaphor, the stated analogy, but it is no less remarkable in the persistency with which the buried, or dead metaphors in her prose imply one consistent set of values. These are the values of commerce and property, of the counting house and the inherited estate. I will divide this set of values rather arbitrarily into five categories. First of all, of *scale* itself, all that metaphor of high and low, sink and rise, advance and decline, superior and inferior, rank and fortune, power and command; as "held below the level," "raise her expectations too high," "materially cast down," "the intimacy between her and Emma must sink." Second, of *money*: credit, value, interest, rate, reserve, secure, change and exchange, alloy, resources, gain, want, collect (for "assume"), reckon, render, account, claim, profit, loss, accrue, tax, due, pay, lose, spend, waste, fluctuate, dispense, "precious deposit," appropriate, commission, safety. Third, of *business and property*: inherit, certify, procure, solicit, entitle, business, venture, scheme, arrangement, insure, cut off, trust, charge, stock. Fourth, of *number and measure*: add, divide, multiply, calculate, how much and how little, more and less. And fifth, of *matter*: incumbrance, weight, substance, material, as material change, or material alteration, comfort.

These terms are constantly appearing, both singly and in clusters. One or two illustrations must suffice:

She listened, and found it well *worth* listening to. That very *dear* part of Emma, her fancy, *received* an *amusing* supply . . . it became henceforth her *prime object of interest*; and during the ten days of their stay at Hartfield it was not to be expected—she did not herself expect—that anything beyond occasional fortuitous assistance could be *afforded by her* to the lovers. They *might advance* rapidly if they would, however; they *must advance* somehow or other, whether they would or no. She hardly wished to have more leisure for them. They are people, who *the more you do* for them, *the less they will do* for themselves. Mr. and Mrs. John Knightley . . . were exciting, of course, rather *more than the usual interest*. Till this year, every long vacation since their marriage had been *divided* between Hartfield and Donwell Abbey.

This language, as a functioning element in the novel, begins to call attention to itself when we discover it in clusters where moral

and material values are either juxtaposed or equated: "no material injury *accrued* either to body or mind"; "glad to have *purchased* the mortification of having loved"; "except in a moral light, as a penance, a lesson, a source of *profitable humiliation* to her own mind, she would have been thankful to be *assured* of never seeing him again . . . his welfare twenty miles off would *administer* most satisfaction."

It would seem that we are in a world of peculiarly *material* value, a world of almost instinctive material interests in its basic, intuitive response to experience. The style has created a texture, the "special feel" of that world. At the same time, on the surface of the action, this is usually a world of refined sensibility, of concern with moral propriety, and in Emma's case, presumably at least, of intelligent clarity of evaluation. A large portion of Jane Austen's comedy arises from the discrepancy that we see here, from the tension between these two kinds of value, these different *scales*, material and moral, which the characters, like the metaphors, are all the time juxtaposing and equating. But when we say that, we have moved from considerations of language alone, into the function of the language in the whole.

How do we transfer ourselves from one to the other? Notice, first of all, that in some very impressive details, the implicit stylistic values erupt every now and then into explicit evaluations in the action, explicit evaluations that are, of course, ironical illuminations of the characters in their special situations. "You were very popular before you came, because you were Mr. Weston's son; but lay out half a guinea at Ford's, and your popularity will stand upon your own virtues."

"No—I cannot call them gifts; but they are things that I have valued very much."

She held the parcel towards her, and Emma read the words *Most Precious treasures* on the top.

Emma's charity: "Emma was very compassionate; and the distress of the poor were as sure of relief from her personal attention and kindness, her counsel and her patience, as from her purse."

Emma's judgment of Mr. Martin:

"... He will be a completely gross, vulgar farmer, totally inattentive to appearances, and thinking of nothing but profit and loss."

"Will he, indeed? That will be very bad."

"How much his business engrosses him already, is very plain from the circumstances of his forgetting to inquire for the book you recommended. He was a great deal too full of the market to think of anything else—which is just as it should be, for a thriving man. What has he to do with books? And I have no doubt that he *will* thrive, and be a very rich man in time; and his being illiterate and coarse need not disturb *us*."

Most impressive, because most central to the theme of the book, this passage:

Emma perceived that her taste was not the only taste on which Mr. Weston depended, and felt that to be the favourite and intimate of a man who had so many intimates and confidantes, was not *the very first distinction in the scale of vanity*. She liked his open manners, but a little less of open-heartedness would have made him a higher character.

We may summarize this much as follows:

1. The language itself defines for us, and defines most clearly, that area of available experience and value from which this novel takes its rise, and on which the novel itself must place the seal of its value. The texture of the style itself announces, therefore, the subject, and warns us, suggesting that we not be deceived by the fine sentiments and the moral scruples of the surface; that this is a material world where property and rank are major and probably as important as "character." More specifically, that this is not simply a novel of courtship and marriage, but a novel about the economic and social significance of courtship and marriage. (The basic situation in all the novels arises from the economics of marriage.) There is other evidence that Jane Austen knew marriage, in her world, to be a market; in her *Letters*, she wrote, "Single women have a dreadful propensity for being poor—which is one very strong argument in favor of matrimony."

2. The implicit textural values created by language become explicit thematic statements in important key phrases such as "the scale of vanity" and "their intimacy must sink." In such phrases we detect the novel's themes (what it has to say about its subject) and its tone, too (how Jane Austen feels about it). We are led now, from

language merely, to structure, to observe the particularized dramatic expression, the actualization, of this general narrative material, this "world."

Let us consider structure from the two points of view of architectural and thematic development. The two are of course interdependent, but we may see the novel more clearly, finally, if we make the separation.

From an architectural point of view, *Emma* seems to consist of four movements, or of four intermeshing blocks, each larger than the preceding. Emma is always the focus for us, but her own stature is altered as one block gives way to the next—that is, she bulks less large in the whole action of each as one follows upon another. The first block is the "Harriet Smith" block, and here Emma's dimensions are nearly coextensive with the block itself; this gives way to the Elton's block (and that includes, of course, others); that, in turn, gives way to the Frank Churchill-Jane Fairfax block; and that, finally, to the Knightley block, where Emma is completely absorbed. John Knightley observes at one point, "Your neighborhood is increasing and you mix more with it." That is, of course, precisely what happens in the structure: an "increasing neighborhood" diminishes Emma. This development is perhaps best represented by the Cole's dinner party, where she finds herself in danger of exclusion and is herself alarmed, and it is completely dramatized in Frank Churchill's casual readiness to use—to abuse—her for his own purposes. Thus, as the plot becomes more intricate, and even as we view it through Emma eyes, she actually plays a less and less central, or relevant part in it.

Now on these blocks of increasing size we must imagine another figure, a cone, to represent Knightley. Its point would lie somewhere near the end of the first, the Harriet block, and through each of the following blocks it would widen, until, in the final block, it would be nearly coextensive with the limits of the block itself. It is important to see that the movement from block to block is accomplished not only by new elements in the action (the arrival of Mrs. Elton; of Jane Fairfax; the death of Mrs. Churchill) but by scenes between Emma and Mr. Knightley himself, scenes in which he usually upbraids her for an error of judgment and scenes out of

which she emerges with an altered awareness, a dim alteration in the first, a slightly clearer alteration in the second and third, and at last, in the fourth, as full an awareness as she is capable of. The first of these is in Chapter 8, and the subject is Harriet; the second, Chapter 18, and the subject is Frank Churchill; the third, Chapter 33, the subject Jane Fairfax; and the last, Chapter 43, the subject Miss Bates. These scenes are debates between moral obstinacy and moral wisdom, and the first is slowly brought up to the proportion of the second. In the last scene, when Knightley takes Emma to task for her cruelty to Miss Bates, she fully recognizes and bitterly repents her fault. She *alters* at last: "could he *even* have seen into her heart," she thinks, "he would not, on this occasion, have found anything to reprove." Only then is she prepared to know that it is only Knightley that she can love, and with that the movement of awareness swells: "Every other part of her mind was disgusting." And then, before his declaration, the movement comes to rest:

When it came to such a pitch as this, she was not able to refrain from a start, or a heavy sigh, or even from walking about the room for a few seconds; and the only source whence anything like consolation or composure could be drawn, was in the resolution of her own better conduct, and the hope that, however inferior in spirit and gaiety might be the following and every future winter of her life to the past, it would yet find her more rational, more acquainted with herself, and leave her less to regret when it were gone.

Thus we have a double movement in the architecture—the diminution of Emma in the social scene, her reduction to her proper place in the whole scale of value (which is her expiation), and the growth of Emma in the moral scheme (which is her enlargement). It is very beautiful.

Now most of this we are never told, and of Emma's diminution, not at all. We are made to experience this double development through the movement of the plot itself. This fact calls attention to Jane Austen's method, and makes us ask what her reasons were for developing it. The method consists of an alteration of narration conducted almost always through the heroine's eyes, with dramatic scenes illustrative of the narrative material. There is almost no direct statement of the significance of the material, and there is a minimum of reported action. The significance of the material comes to us

through two chief sources: the dramatized scene itself, and the play of irony through the narration. Of Jane Austen's skill in making scene speak, I will say nothing, except to point out our awareness of the significance of Emma's silence—she says not a word—in the scene in Chapter 12 where her sister is praising Jane Fairfax and explaining why Jane and Emma had always seemed to everyone to be perfectly suited for an equal friendship; and that later scene, in Chapter 21, where we are made so acutely aware of the presence of the others and their several emotions, as Miss Bates blunders along on the matter of how some people had mistakenly felt that Mr. Elton might have married a certain person—well, clearly, it is Miss Woodhouse herself, who is there, again stonily silent. Now just as the dramatic values of scene are left to speak for themselves, so the moral values are left, implicit *in* the scenes, not discussed through them.

Such a method, intermingling as it does dramatic scene with narrative observations of the heroine, requires from the author a constant irony that at all times transcends the ironic habit of mind of the heroine herself. Sometimes Jane Austen achieves this simply by seeming to accept the scene as the characters pretend that it was; as, for example, following on Emma's silence when Isabella praises Jane, the narrative proceeds: "This topic was discussed very happily, and others succeeded of similar moment, and passed away with similar harmony." Sometimes she achieves it through an unobtrusive verbal pointing, as: "Poor Mr. Woodhouse was silent from consternation; but everybody else had something to say; everybody was either surprised, or not surprised, and had some question to ask, or some comfort to offer." Could the triviality of the situation find a more effective underlining? On still other occasions, Jane Austen achieves this necessary irony simply by shifting her point of view a fraction away from the person who presumably holds it. This is shown nowhere more effectively than in the passage I have already cited, in which we begin with Emma's observation, then shift to that phrase, "the scale of vanity," which cannot possibly be hers, and then return at once to her.

Emma perceived that her taste was not the only taste on which Mr. Weston depended, and felt that to be the favourite and intimate of a man who had

so many intimates and confidantes, was not the very first distinction in the scale of vanity. She liked his open manners, but a little less of open-heartedness would have made him a higher character. General benevolence, but not general friendship, made a man what he ought to be. She could fancy such a man.

I am pressing this matter of the method of scene and the method of irony not only because it is through this method that the significance of the architectural structure of the work is brought home to us, that double movement I have described, but because it reveals an important fact about Jane Austen's relation to her audience, then and now, and because, unless we understand this relation, we cannot see as much as we should see in that thematic structure to which I will presently turn, or see at all that relationship of social and moral scale that is the heart of the book. Jane Austen was in an ambiguous situation in relation to her readers, a situation in which she was committed simultaneously to cherish and abominate her world. Within the framework of what is presumably a happy story, where everyone gets married off properly in the end, she must still make her comment, from her deepest moral evaluations, on the misery of this happiness. The texture of her style already has suggested that the world she pictures is hardly founded on the highest values. But that is not enough. She must besides develop a technique which could both reveal and conceal, that would give only as much as the reader wished to take. (That is why she can still be read in both the most frivolous and the most serious spirit.) Her problem—and perhaps this is the problem of every novelist of manners, at least if he is a satirist, who criticizes the society within which he yet wishes to remain and, indeed, whose best values are his own—her problem was to develop a novelistic technique that would at once conceal and reveal her strongest feelings, her basic observation of her heroine and her heroine's world, and that would express with sufficient clarity if one looks at that technique closely, the ultimate values here involved.

For those who do not read while they run, the range of Jane Austen's irony, from the gentlest to the most corrosive, will suggest that she was perfectly able to see with absolute clarity the defects of the world she used. I will not trouble with the mild examples, but only with the gradation at the extreme:

"It was a delightful visit—perfect, in being much too short." And she leaned back in the corner to indulge her murmurs, or to reason them away; probably a little of both—such being the commonest process of a not ill-disposed mind.

Surely a mind that throws out observations such as these is not an entirely well-disposed one. But to go on—

"I am persuaded that you can be as insincere as your neighbours, when it is necessary."

Still further: Emma on Miss Bates:

"... and nobody is afraid of her—that is a great charm."

Consider next the bitter violence of the verb, in that comment on boarding schools, where young women are "*screwed* out of health and into vanity." And come last, to the extreme, an amazing irruption into this bland social surface of what has been called her "*regulated hatred*"—

Miss Bates stood in the very worst predicament in the world for having much of the public favour; and she had no intellectual superiority to make atonement to herself, or *frighten those who might hate her into outward respect*.

Surely there is no failure here to judge the values of the social scale. We, in turn, are enabled to recognize these values, to judge the material, in other words, to place our evaluation upon it, not only by these oblique uses of irony, but by two other means: first, the dramatization of Emma's diminution in the community as we see more and more of it; second, by judging the real significance of her end.

The first, the dramatization of value, or moral scale, is achieved through what I have been calling "thematic structure," a structure that supports and unifies the architectural structure, the thematic integration of characters. Thematic structure exists, first of all, in the selection and disposal of characters around the heroine, and the relationship in moral traits which we are meant to observe between the heroine and the others. Emma is in many ways a charming heroine, bright and attractive and energetic, but Jane Austen never lets us forget that if she is superior to the Eltons, for example, the author (or, if you wish, Knightley) is superior to her. Emma's vanity is of no trivial kind. She is not "personally vain," Knightley

tells us; "her vanity lies another way." It lies, for example, in her very charity. "Harriet would be loved as one to whom she could be useful. For Mrs. Weston there was nothing to be done; for Harriet everything." It is the vanity of giving, and brings to mind E. M. Forster's remark that, for many people indeed, it is better to receive than to give. It is the vanity, next, of power, for through the exercise of her charity, she succeeds in the imposition of her will. It is the vanity of abstract intellect. That Emma is capable of sound judgment is evident in her recognition of the real Elton even as she is urging him upon Harriet; it is evident again in her analysis of the real relation that probably pertains between Frank Churchill and his step-mother, even as she is herself about to fall in love with him. It is evident again in some of her self-studies, when, for example, after the Elton-Harriet fiasco, she resolves, in tears, that, since it is too late to be "simpleminded and ignorant," like Harriet, she will be at least "humble and discreet." In the next chapter she reveals herself incapable of acting on her own self-judgment, and Mr. Knightley again points up the discrepancy for us.

Emma: "He may have as strong a sense of what would be right as you can have, without being so equal, under particular circumstances, to act up to it."

Knightley: "Then it would not be so strong a sense. If it failed to produce equal exertion, it could not be an equal conviction."

Emma's intellectual judgments do not relate sufficiently to her conduct; in short, she is immoral. And we are not to be surprised when, rather early in the novel, she announces her own values: "those pleasantest feelings of our nature—eager curiosity and warm prepossession." The novel shows us the disastrous moral consequences of such insufficient standards.

This is Emma in her vanity. Let us observe, now, the kind of symbolic relationships in which her vanity is placed: First, of contrast, the contrast being with Miss Bates, and none in the novel more explicit:

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress her.

Ten pages later:

Miss Bates . . . a woman neither young, handsome, rich, nor married. Miss Bates stood in the very worst predicament in the world for having much of the public favour . . . and yet she was a happy woman.

That Emma unites with "some of the best blessings of existence," some of the worst possibilities of human society, is all too soon quite evident, but nowhere more evident than when she says of Miss Bates, "so silly, so satisfied, so smiling . . ."

The second kind of symbolic relationship is not contrasting but comparative, and is evident in Harriet and Mrs. Elton. Of Harriet we need only point out that she is a silly but harmless girl educated by Emma into exactly the same sort of miscalculations, only to be abused by Emma for her folly. The comparison with Mrs. Elton is more fully developed: Emma's judgment on the Coles, who are struggling to rise above the stigma of trade, is exactly duplicated by Mrs. Elton's judgment on a family living near Maple Grove, called Tupman: ". . . very lately settled there, and encumbered with many low connections, but giving themselves immense airs, and expecting to be on a footing with the old established families. . . . They came from Birmingham. . . . One has not great hopes for Birmingham." The analogy with Emma is detailed: Mrs. Elton, like Emma, has an almost aggressive determination to "do" for other people, and to ride over their wishes; on the "scale of vanity," she is precisely where we begin with Emma: "a vain woman, extremely well satisfied with herself, and thinking much of her own importance; that she meant to shine and be very superior; but with manners which had been formed in a bad school; pert and familiar; that all her notions were drawn from one set of people, and one style of living; that, if not foolish, she was ignorant . . ." And Emma makes this analysis: Emma, who herself is "amused by such a picture of another set of beings"—the Martins; who broods on the inferior society of Highbury; who makes one test only, the class test, except when she judges creations of her own, like Harriet, and even Harriet's high-born antecedents, as Emma fancies them, are apparent in her face; Emma, whose manners at one point, at any rate, are not merely pert and familiar, but coldly cruel, which even Mrs. Elton never is.

The third kind of symbolic relationship is the contrasting-comparative kind that is evident in Jane Fairfax. This is a crucial relationship in the thematic structure. We are told that they are alike in many ways—age, station, accomplishments. They are alike, furthermore, in that Emma *thinks* of Jane as complacent and reserved, whereas we *know* Emma to be both. Her reserve with Jane Fairfax is complete from the beginning, and stoney. Her complacency is nearly admitted: she “could not quarrel with herself”; “I cannot really change for the better.” What a contrast, then, in actuality. Jane, whom we see through Emma’s eyes as complacent, cold, tiresome, and in some ways rather disgusting, is, really, as much an antithesis to Emma as Miss Bates, and a much more difficult antithesis for Emma ever to deal with, to really admit. She is a woman capable of rash and improper behavior, a genuine commitment to passion, a woman torn by feeling, and feeling directed at an object not entirely worthy. She is hardly prudent. In short, she is quite different from what Emma sees, and quite different from what Emma is—all too complacent and perhaps really cold—and she stands in the novel as a kind of symbolic rebuke to Emma’s emotional deficiencies, just as Knightley stands as a rebuke to her moral deficiencies. That Emma has emotional deficiencies is perhaps sufficiently apparent in her attachment to her father, and in her use of that attachment. Jane Fairfax is the blurred threat to Emma’s complacency, the threat that Emma herself has never brought into focus in her own life and character, and at the end of the novel still has not, and so still has not achieved it for herself, or any radical reform of her qualities. They have merely moved on the scale.

So much for the heroine and the female characters. If we look now at the men, we can consider them as variations, or gradations, on the two traits, egotism and sociability, or “Candor,” which is the positive virtue sought by Mr. Knightley. These characters run from Mr. Elton, the vain social snob, all egotism; through Frank Churchill, the man whose candor conceals a treacherous egotism; through Mr. Weston, so thoroughly amiable as to be nearly without judgment, and yet an egotist himself, the egotism of parenthood; to Mr. Knightley, who is the pivot, the middleman, moderate and sound, balanced and humane, neither an egotist nor a gadabout.

From him, we shade off into his brother, the dour social egotist, to Mr. Woodhouse, the destructive (though comic, of course) malingering egotist.

Emma's relationships to them are revealing: she patronizes and then scorns Elton, of course; she "loves" Frank Churchill; she is fond of Weston; toward Knightley she holds a friendly animosity; she has tolerance for John; she adores her father. These relationships or emotional responses are Jane Austen's way of dramatizing Emma, of showing us her value. We see her through them, even as we are seeing them through her. It is a process of reciprocal illumination. And so in both the men and women, we come to see her above and beyond her presentation of herself, and at the same time, of course, we come to see the community at large through them—they represent Jane Austen's social "analysis," her breakdown of a community into its major traits, its two poles. If we study the bulking up at one end or the other of the scale, we can hardly conclude that the analysis is entirely friendly.

Thus we begin to see the real accomplishment of this objective technique, how deep it can go, how much subtle work it can do, how it defines its interpretations and analysis of the material, how it separates the material (which is trivial) and the effect (which is grave). Most remarkable, perhaps, how it holds together, makes one, the almost bland, comic tone, appropriate to the kind of society, too brittle for a severer tone, and a really bitter, sometimes acrid theme.

To define the theme completely we have to look closely at the real history of Emma. For all her superiority, Emma's values are really the values of the society she patronizes, and although she partially resolves her personal dilemma (hers really is a "profitable humiliation"), she *retains* those qualities: complacency, a kind of social cruelty, snobbery (Harriet must sink), and even greed (little Henry, who must inherit Donnell). Emma's self-study has always been partially mistaken; will it always be correct henceforth? Except for her final moment of awareness, her others have always exempted herself from judgment; can we believe that that is never to happen again? Does the final comment not come from Knightley, when Emma says, "Poor child! . . . what will become of her?" and he replies, "Nothing very bad. The fate of thousands. She will be dis-

agreeable in infancy, and correct herself as she grows older. I am losing all my bitterness against spoilt children, my dearest Emma." The modification is minor. Does Jane Austen say less? Near the end she tells us:

Seldom, very seldom does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised, or a little mistaken; but where, as in this case, though the conduct is mistaken, the feelings are not, it may not be very material. Mr. Knightley could not impute to Emma a more relenting heart than she possessed or a heart more disposed to accept of his.

How severely does Jane Austen "chasten" Emma? "Do not physic them," says Isabella of her children; are we not left to "physic" Emma, to chasten her and her world together, with all necessary guidance from the style and the basic motives that analysis reveals in the work itself?

When we say that Emma is diminished at the end, as her world is, in a way, for us—the bright, easy society put in a real shade—we are really saying that she has been absorbed into that world, and has become inseparable from it. This observation suggests that we look again at the end of the novel. There is something apparently aimless and long-winded about it. Of *Pride and Prejudice* the author said, "The work is rather too light, bright, and sparkling; it wants shade; it wants to be stretched out here and there, with a long chapter of sense, if it could be had." In *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*, Jane Austen's heroines were superior to their world. Then, in *Mansfield Park*, her dull Fanny was completely submissive to the conventional pieties of this same world, somewhat white-washed. In *Emma*, Jane Austen seems to do what the remark about *Pride and Prejudice* aims at. Emma is finally nearly at the top of the moral scale, with Knightley, but the moral scale still has its relation to the social scale. The entire end of *Emma* is such a "shade" (even as it busily gets its characters happily married off, it is creating the shade, the moral shade, in which they will live) and the only justification for that long ending, once the Emma-Knightley arrangements have been made, is that it is needed there, as a kind of decrescendo into the social twilight that lies at the heart of the book. And so the end remains "open"—a question, in a

way. It is Emma who at one point near the end exclaims, "I like everything decided and open"; everything here is at once decided and, in another sense, open.

How completely resolved are these strains of feeling? Emma and Jane, for example? Emma and Frank? How much "candor" is there? And how "happy" is this marriage, with Knightley having to move into old Mr. Woodhouse's establishment? Isn't it all, perhaps, a little superficial—not the writing but the self-avowals of the characters? A little perfunctory, as comedy may be, telling us thereby that this *is* comedy? One is reminded of the end of *Mansfield Park*:

I purposefully abstain from dates on this occasion, that everyone may be at liberty to fix their own, aware that the cure of unconquerable passions, and the transfer of unchanging attachments, must vary as to time in different people. I only entreat everybody to believe that exactly at the time when it was quite natural that it should be so, and not a week earlier, Edmund did cease to care about Miss Crawford, and became as anxious to marry Fanny as Fanny herself could desire.

Emma, then, is a complex study of self-importance and egotism, and malice, as these are absorbed from a society whose morality and values are derived from the economics of class; and a study, further, in the mitigation of these traits, as the heroine comes into partial self-recognition, and at the same time sinks more completely into that society. Just as with Elizabeth Bennet, her individual being, as she has discovered it, will make that society better, but it will not make it different. This is moral realism, and it shows nowhere more clearly than in the very end, when the pilfering of a poultry house is given us as the qualification of "the perfect happiness of the union." The irresolution of the book gives it its richness, and its tautness and precision of structure and style give it its clarity. The two together make it great.

We have not said enough about Knightley, and if we are to see Jane Austen's values as they positively underlie her drama, we must look at him. Only a little pompous, he is the humanely civilized man; it is he whose judgments move beyond class; only he seems to breathe deeply; only he, certainly, ventures out impervious to that "weather" that is always keeping the others in a state of alarm and inside their littleness; it is he who wants complete candor and

no mystery; it is he who makes Jane Austen's demand that awareness and conduct be brought into the relationship which is morality. In the only unclear speech in the novel (a haunting speech, in Chapter 33) he observes the separation: "her own comparative littleness in action, if not in consciousness." This is likewise Jane Austen's demand, although she lets Emma speak it: "faith engaged . . . and manners so *very* disengaged." But if there were a complete congruity between profession and conduct, there would be no comedy in the world; and Jane Austen wants comedy.

That comedy was sufficient for her purposes she certainly knew, just as she knew the size of the world her comedy measures. John Knightley says, "Business, you know, may bring money, but friendship hardly does." Frank Churchill says, "I would have given worlds—all the worlds one ever has to give—for another half-hour." And chiefly that phrase "a crowd in a little room," varied four times in a dozen lines:

Emma demurred. "It would be a crowd—a sad crowd; and what could be worse than dancing without space to turn in? . . . Nothing can be further from pleasure than to be dancing in a crowd—and a crowd in a little room."

"There is no denying it," he replied. "I agree with you exactly. A crowd in a little room—Miss Woodhouse, you have the art of giving pictures in a few words."

Miss Woodhouse has, in fact, given us a picture of Jane Austen's art. And it suggests that a narrow scene, like a good plot, is the occasion of pressure on the characters, to squeeze out their moral essence.

Their being fixed, so absolutely fixed, in the same place, was bad for each, for all three. Not one of them had the power of removal, or of effecting any material change of society. They must encounter each other, and make the best of it.

And again:

When she considered how peculiarly unlucky poor Mr. Elton was in being in the same room at once with the woman he had just married, the woman he had wanted to marry, and the woman whom he had been expected to marry, she must allow him to have the right to look as little wise . . . as could be.

The weather, so much a part of this book as of the others, is a double device for Jane Austen: it keeps these characters on the narrow

social stage where they enact their moral drama; and it underlines, for us, the fact of their enclosure, their narrowness. It is only in Christmas weather, in the season of love, we are told, that everyone ventures boldly out. In Highbury, as elsewhere, it comes, alas, only once a year. We may conclude then, that the scene may be narrow, the action trivial, the feelings (from the point of view of other kinds of novels) thin—but the condition is the human condition, and the problem is nothing less than original sin—the dry destructiveness of egotism. And so the novel, if one is pressed to say so, is really about the narrowness of a wholly “secularized” life—in Eliot’s meaning—no prevailing spiritual awareness, no prevailing emotional fullness, no prevailing gravity except in the author’s construction, in the character she allows to speak for her, in her own oblique comment. We are reminded of all this in one of the few metaphorical outbursts of the novel. Jane Fairfax, resigning herself to the life of a school-teacher, is thrown into the posture of religious renunciation:

With the fortitude of a devoted novitiate, she had resolved at one-and-twenty to complete the sacrifice, and retire from all the pleasures of life, of rational intercourse, equal society, peace and hope, to penance and mortification for ever.

And her motive? The deplorable absence of a fortune!

Alcestis

ISABEL WILLIAMS VERRY

It was lonely in the zero dark, Admetus,
not even the ghosts of flowers for company
but moving animals
invisible
plush-footed
while outside the tomb
the god of death gulped sacrificial blood.

The dead are nothing, you have said.
The pore and marrow of their god, as well,

is nothing.
Who but Heracles
could box with marsh-gas or with cloud
and buffet it to bargaining?
He caught my hand
before death's leprous love-making began
and led me to the presence of my lord.

Veiled, mute, I stand
vertical flesh
not horizontal bone
which you unrecognizing yet desire
forgetful of your celibate oath when I
(not father, no, nor mother either)
withdrew, your proxy, into onyx cold.

It was too lonely there
(sealed under midnight, fear locked in the brain)
remembering the living
ticks away
downy with sun, ripe-blooded as the grape.

I am returned, Admetus,
but instead
of that pale sister that the sculptors formed
to comfort you bereaved
you now have two
Alcestis replicas.
Nor wish nor will
can strike a fingerling of fire from one
who died for your too acquiescent sake.

Joseph Conrad

A fin de siècle Novelist—A Study in Style and Method

FREDERICK R. KARL

STEPHEN, the artist-hero of *The Sisters*, Conrad's unfinished novel written in 1896, is a typical *fin de siècle* disillusioned idealist, an early counterpart of Martin Decoud (*Nostromo*) and Axel Heyst (*Victory*). Stephen draws back instinctively from personal contacts and seeks salvation in the pursuit of immortal masterpieces. This Alastor-like spirit, with the exhausted manner of Huysmans' Des Esseintes, suffers from a soul infected by ennui, torpor, and a mysterious longing for completion. In nature he seeks the sources of all inspiration, but with a sigh of "Not here! Not here!" he turns away to the "undesirable security of perfect solitude." This extant fragment of *The Sisters*—otherwise of little intrinsic importance—is interesting, for it affords a view of Conrad dealing with an artist-type and fully carrying over the studied attitudes and excessively ornate language of the late nineteenth century.

Although most of Conrad's critics have paid their tribute to him as one of the incomparable stylists in English, they have not examined his early prose in order to find its immediate roots beyond, perhaps, tracing it to the influence of Shakespeare and the Bible. When Conrad finished his first novel, *Almayer's Folly*, in 1894, his lush prose obviously seemed to go against the style prevailing in serious contemporary English fiction which was turning from mid-Victorian elaborateness, while, in its diction and color, Conrad's work directly reflected much late nineteenth-century poetry. Moreover, at the same time that Conrad's prose reflected his contemporaries in poetry, his novelistic ideas also closely approximated their poetic impressions. Presumably, the young Conrad was too strongly influenced by his heavy reading in English literature of the 1860's to 1880's, especially in poetry, to escape the embellished style prevailing there; so that when he began to write he was well aware

of *fin de siècle* mannerisms. This essay, then, proposes to show how Conrad's two earliest novels absorbed the characteristic style and ideas peculiar to much late nineteenth-century poetry.

II

As a first novel, *Almayer's Folly* paradoxically displays the exhaustive and "sucked-out" quality of a very old and disillusioned novelist. Published in 1895, it clearly manifests the language, the deliberate rhythms, and many of the mannerisms of *fin de siècle* literature. *Almayer's Folly* is a prose counterpart of 1890's poetry, of early Yeats and Dowson, of Arthur Symons and the lush siftings of the pre-Raphaelites, in particular the softness of D. G. Rossetti and otiosity of William Morris. Conrad's novel, as befitting its background, is one of decadence and breakdown, a pageant of retreat, of dreams, of filmy torpor and fatigue. Its chief images are those of languor—a languor of character, of language, and of setting, even a languor of despair.

Conrad's setting in *Almayer* and his second novel, *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896), are exotic, full of jungle picturesqueness, semi-civilized natives, and violent emotions. The vivid and often opulent imagery—the basic stuff of his early work—is found later in new settings but with the same purport, becoming transformed into the storm scenes of *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* the natural descriptions of *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, and *Nostromo*, the city backgrounds of *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*, the island backdrop of *Victory*. Consequently, *Almayer's Folly*, despite its obvious slightness of conception, is a mine for those interested in viewing Conrad's methods and language in his apprenticeship.

It is of some significance to note how Conrad organized his material to suggest the novel's pervading theme of the old and the exhausted, that lack of spirit and energy which characterized much 1890's prose and poetry. Many of the early reviewers paid tribute to Conrad for his adventurous use of language and recognized the importance of his awareness of words, although they were undecided whether or not it was advantageous to the theme.¹ As the reviewers suggested, it was surely through a careful selection of language that

¹ *Athenaeum*, No. 3526, Pt. 1 (May 25, 1895), 671. *The Bookman*, II (August 1895), 39 (by James MacArthur).

² *Almayer's Folly* will

Conrad explored his basic themes of man and nature, of greed, survival, and courage. Malaya and Africa in the early novels are as much a mirror of the late nineteenth-century world as the more mature works set in Europe and the Americas are of the twentieth.

In his manner of presentation, the apprentice Conrad was not unlike the young Yeats or the young Melville, for whose early work he was enthusiastic. As their vision deepened their verbal style changed, Yeats becoming leaner and harder, Conrad and Melville less embellished and more conservative. Conrad's early enamelled prose has many striking similarities to Yeats' "woven" world. The long-drawn-out vowel sounds of the following passage suggest the languorous setting:

. . . the big open space where the thick-leaved trees put black patches of shadow which seemed to float on a flood of smooth, intense light that rolled up to the houses and down to the stockade and over the river, where it broke and sparkled in thousands of glittering wavelets, like a band woven of azure and gold edged with the brilliant green of the forests guarding both banks of the Pantai.²

In the same section Conrad speaks of the "smell of decaying blossoms" and the "acrid smoke from the cooking fires," of the "clear blue of the hot sky," the "light puffs [of breeze] playing capriciously" and the "faint rustle of trees"—the relaxed dormancy of a hot afternoon beneath a sweltering sun, the sensuous retreat into sluggishness and apathy.

So overwhelming is the presence of the jungle, so overpowering the slow rhythm of this vast primeval slime, that the people in contrast seem mere pawns in the grasp of uncontrolled forces. Conrad's description of background drives home their severe isolation; the vast swamp of trees and roots and mud seems to suck up every semblance of life and to reduce man to insignificance. Supplementing the jungle, Conrad uses the symbol of storm, an oft-repeated phenomenon in his later work, as an epitome of nature's power and man's insignificance. The wild fury of the storm—first its "oppressive calm," "furious blast," "fantastic shapes," "driving roar," then the "tormented river" and the turmoil of "leaping waters"—all these images are natural background for man's relatively minor

² *Almayer's Folly*, p. 131. All reference to *Almayer's Folly* and *An Outcast of the Islands* will be to the Kent Edition, published by Doubleday (Garden City, New York, 1925).

agonies, for man's impotence against cosmic forces.

After the storm, as if in sluggish opposition, there is once again the near-silent jungle which murmurs and hums—those onomatopoeic words suggesting the same sense of primeval drowsiness which we find in Yeats' characteristically soft poetry of the mid-1880's and early 1890's. Yeats spoke of a "drooping brow," of "great boughs," "quiet boughs," "heavy boughs," and of "great boughs [that] drop tranquillity"³; his poems were filled with murmuring seas and "the water's drowsy blaze," taken together with "the feathered ways" and "vapoury footsoles" of a hushed evening.

In a passage reminiscent of Yeats' Indian poems, Conrad, in his description of the slave girl Taminah—that pitiful double of Almayer—approaches the perfection of pure silence and pure languor:

Then she paddled home slowly in the afternoon, often letting her canoe float with the lazy stream in the quiet backwater of the river. The paddle hung idle in the water as she sat in the stern, one hand supporting her chin, her eyes wide open, listening intently to the whispering of her heart that seemed to swell at last into a song of extreme sweetness. . . . And when the sun was near its setting she walked to the bathing-place and heard it as she stood on the tender grass of the low bank, her robe at her feet, and looked at the reflection of her figure on the glass-like surface of the creek. Listening to it she walked slowly back, her wet hair hanging over her shoulders; lying down to rest under the bright stars, she closed her eyes to the murmur of the water below, of the warm wind above; to the voice of nature speaking through the faint noises of the great forest, and to the song of her own heart. (p. 115)

Taminah's pre-Raphaelite figure caught in a narcissistic pose is characteristic of the lazy, measured beat of this *fin de siècle* work. Moreover, her sense of peace and tranquillity amid potential violence is a significant prefiguration of Almayer's own position.

Those critics who pointed to Conrad as a strikingly new figure working in English, failed to see continuity between poetic language of the 1890's and Conrad's early work, and failed to recognize how completely he was part of the 1890's spirit. The work of Arthur Symons, a central nineties figure who Jessie Conrad said was the only poet Conrad read with pleasure, is full of "sea moans" and

³ "The Indian to his Love," *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (New York, 1951).

"dark shivering trees," "sickle moons" and "delicate ivory"—that whole paraphernalia of late nineteenth-century poets who combined the vivid mannerisms of romanticism with a misunderstood and misused French symbolism. Like Ernest Dowson, that frail figure of washed-out manhood who wrote of pale and faded roses, long-dead leaves, the pallor of ivories, the "dread oblivion of lost things," "languid lashes," and a vast assortment of exhausted objects, Conrad, similarly, wrote of the murmuring river behind the white veil, the soft whisper of eddies washing against the river bank, and the breathless calm of the breeze. As much as Yeats and Dowson, Conrad learned his literary English at the end of the century, and was only able to make it leaner and more pungent as he developed a more mature style.

Of parallel importance in Conrad's early work is his use of another type of image: the image of despair. Among Conrad's contemporaries, this imagery had of course gained prominence—in the necropolis of James Thomson's nocturnal imagination, in Dowson's personal laments, in Beardsley's nihilistic sketches, in the pessimism of John Davidson's distorted visions; it would reappear in Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* (1896) and come to fruition in Conrad's own *Heart of Darkness* (1899), in which a personal malaise became objective and gained epic proportions. In *Almayer*, this image supports the languor of the jungle, but it is essentially a city image, a civilized image transferred to an exotic setting. In that scene, for example, portraying Almayer's desolation, his exhaustion, his life-come-to-nought, we have a virtual waste land of sterility and dust:

He went towards the office door and with some difficulty managed to open it. He entered in a cloud of dust that rose under his feet. Books open with torn pages bestrewed the floor; other books lay about grimy and black, looking as if they had never been opened. . . . In the middle of the room the big office desk, with one of its legs broken, careened over like the hull of a stranded ship; most of the drawers had fallen out, disclosing heaps of paper yellow with age and dirt. . . . The desk, the paper, torn books, and the broken shelves, all under a thick coat of dust. The very dust and bones of a dead and gone business. . . . He started with a great fear in his heart, and feverishly began to rake in the papers scattered on the floor, broke the chair into bits, splintered the drawers by banging them against the desk, and made a big heap of all that rubbish in one corner of the room. (pp. 199-200)

In a similar vein, we have an earlier scene of the deserted Almayer, forsaken by all, living in a ghost house, a significant symbol of one type of neurosis-ridden late nineteenth-century individual.

At his feet lay the overturned table, amongst a wreck of crockery and broken bottles. The appearance as of traces left by a desperate struggle was accentuated by the chairs, which seemed to have been scattered violently all over the place, and now lay about the verandah with a lamentable aspect of inebriety in their helpless attitudes. Only Nina's big rocking-chair, standing black and motionless on its high runner, towered above the chaos of demoralized furniture, unflinchingly dignified and patient, waiting for its burden.

. . . A couple of bats, encouraged by the darkness and the peaceful state of affairs, resumed their silent and oblique gambols over Almayer's head. . . . (p. 157)

The language of desolation joins the language of exhaustion and retreat to fix the atmosphere of *Almayer's Folly*, and to give substance to its ghostly characters. The description of a once active working office and once-inhabited house, together with the passages of torpor and languor, epitomizes Conrad's *fin de siècle* world.

In his conception of character as well, we find that same sense of desolation, frustration, and exhaustion characteristic of the poetry of Dowson, Symons, Thomson, Yeats, and Oscar Wilde. The comedy of Almayer—a man of great hopes and only moderate abilities, an expedient man who found out that circumstances were set to destroy him—is played out against a vast panorama of natural forces which he is unable to control or even understand. It is an old Almayer we see falling further and further into personal and social isolation; an Almayer separated from his wife and child by race, suspected by the Dutch authorities of illegal activities, opposed by the Arabs and Malay natives, enemy of the vestigial jungle and ever-present river which brought in the Arabs and took away Nina and Dain, deserted by an old and ineffectual Lingard who is beset by his own sense of failure; an Almayer who lives with his old shrewish wife and tries to deal with those predatory statesmen of Sambir, old Babalatchi, old Lakambi, and old Abdulla. Only Nina and Dain are young, as if belonging already to the new century, and significantly they escape to another place, away from the decaying jungle world, away from the aged and desolate to a rebirth among new surround-

ings. Remaining is an Almayer sunk so low in the human scale that his only friend is Iaminah the slave girl, beaten and ostracized by the others. In their common suffering and insufficiency they find momentary identification but never real sympathy or feeling.⁴ Defeated, unimportant, shrunken in size, Almayer is, like the century itself, ready to die. Victimized by his own greed, Almayer rarely gains even pity, for he clearly is a figure of debility and fitfulness, never one of defiance or strength.

III

Like the ineffectual Almayer, Willems, the chief character in *An Outcast of the Islands* (1896)—which goes back to an earlier period in the lives of the characters of *Almayer's Folly*—is a man of vain pretensions brought to isolation, sensory depletion, and personal impotence. That same sense of debility and exhaustion prevalent in the earlier book is present in *An Outcast*, but here attached to a dominant death theme; for the jungle has gained in malevolence, and the sea is an ambivalent force of life and death.

Willems, who is by no means a tragic hero (almost an anti-tragic hero, in his way a clown), is related by Conrad to a Hell-Death motif,⁵ and his collapse is imagistically suggested in many scenes which imply both living-death and real death. When early in the book Aïssa, the native seductress, veils herself against Willems' wishes, she seals off real contact between them and becomes an enclosed mummy "of cheap cotton goods" who sucks in Willems' will, leaving him "lost in abominable desire" and doomed as a human being, cut off from civilization and civilized feeling. A similar image is intensified later in the book as Willems and Aïssa are caught in a trap of frustration and emotional exhaustion, cognizant that there can be nothing between them now that even passion has been extinguished. Aïssa suddenly lets down her hair, literally, and it falls "scattered over her shoulders like a funeral

⁴ Almayer identifies with two people, Taminah and the mangled body of what passes for Dain Maroola; one is the living-dead, the other truly dead, and Almayer partakes of each. In that crushed body he sees the broken and smashed dreams of his past and present, and his thwarted hopes for the future. "A dead Malay; he had seen many dead Malays without any emotion; and now he felt inclined to weep, but it was over the fate of a white man he knew; a man that fell over a deep precipice and did not die." (p. 99)

⁵ What I call the Hell-Death motif is a persistent theme that runs through Conrad's early work and seems a concomitant of his Malayan and African experiences.

veil. . . . she rested her head on her drawn-up knees . . . and she sat in the abandoned posture of those who sit weeping by the dead, of those who watch and mourn over a corpse." (pp. 286-87) As the relationship between Willems and Aïssa reaches its blackest moments, Conrad by a series of striking images and by lavish use of description implies their "No-Exit" frustration, their sitting by the river Styx in their own personalized hell. Conrad pictures them as shades, as the living-dead who wait hopelessly at the nadir of despair:

Those three human beings [Willams, Aïssa, and an old and decrepit serving woman, who is "a shrivelled, an unmoved, a passive companion of their disaster"] abandoned by all were like shipwrecked people left on an insecure and slippery ledge by the retiring tide of an angry sea—listening to its distant roar, living anguished between the menace of its return and the hopeless horror of their solitude—in the midst of a tempest of passion, of regret, of disgust, of despair. (p. 328)

That old serving woman—the ever-present Fate out of *Macbeth*—seems in her sorceress's caldron to be boiling out Willems' last moments:

The water in the iron pan on the cooking fire boiled furiously, belching out volumes of white steam that mixed with the thin black thread of smoke. The old woman appeared to him through this as if in a fog, squatting on her heels, impassive and weird. (p. 348)

A like image, supplementing Willems' despair of Aïssa, is conveyed in the scene between Lingard and Almayer when their inability to kill a wily housefly symbolizes the frustration of their urgent attempts to escape the situation: "Lingard struck at it with his hat. The fly swerved and Almayer dodged his head out of the way. Then Lingard aimed another ineffectual blow." The fly continues to evade the two men who lunge at it and swing their arms to no avail. "But suddenly the buzz died out . . . leaving Lingard and Almayer standing face to face . . . looking very puzzled and idle, their arms hanging uselessly by their sides—like men disheartened by some portentous failure." (p. 169) As the fly evades their efforts to trap it, so does Aïssa and all she stands for elude Willems, until life becomes meaningless for him with or without her.

The Hell-Death motif which characterizes both *Almayer* and

An Outcast is nowhere better seen than in man's ineffectual efforts to sustain nature. Conrad's jungle background, despite its torpor, is also a snare, a den of struggle for survival in which man is worn down and subjected to inhuman forces. Towering over Willems and emphasizing his isolation, the trees themselves look "sombre, severe, and malevolently solid, like a giant crowd of pitiless enemies pressing round silently to witness his slow agony." (p. 329) Nature becomes the sole enduring thing, deathless in its omnipotence, and man in his struggles becomes frailer and more ephemeral. Willems literally surrenders his will to the unknown, to those unidentifiable forces, working within and without, which sap life and reduce resistance.

The sun in its oppression and cruelty becomes an ally of the will-sapping jungle. It is presented as a thing which destroys all motion, buries all shadows, and checks all breath, whose powerful serenity penetrates to the earth and silences all within its range. Through the repetition of phrases in the following passage, Conrad tries to approximate the sun's relentless fury:

Strength and resolution, body and mind alike were helpless and tried to hide before the rush of the fire from heaven. Only the frail butterflies, the fearless children of the sun, the capricious tyrants of the flowers, fluttered audaciously in the open, and their minute shadows hovered in swarms over the drooping blossoms, ran lightly on the withering grass, or glided on the dry and cracked earth. (p. 85)

In his use of language, which differs little in essentials from that in *Almayer*, Conrad attempted once again to convey the mysterious and exhaustive powers of nature. But even by his second novel, he was still too much a man of his day to go against the vocabulary and tones of the 1890's. While *An Outcast* may perhaps display less luxuriance and exuberance than *Almayer*, the language, as in the following passage, is still lush; particularly evident are the languid adjectives and slow-paced verbs which fill out the scene:

... the landscape of brown golds and brilliant emeralds under the dome of hot sapphire; the whispering big trees; the loquacious nipa-palms that rattled their leaves volubly in the night breeze, as if in haste to tell him [Lingard] all the secrets of the great forest behind them. He loved the heavy scents of blossoms and black earth, that breath of life and death which lingered over his brig in the damp air of tepid and peaceful nights. (p. 201)

Contrasted with the languor of the jungle and the energy-sucking sun, is the river which leads to the sea, that river of freshness which in *Almayer* took away Nina and Dain. But, as Conrad describes it, the river can in turn "nurse love or hate on its submissive and heartless bosom"; it can be a "deliverance, a prison, a refuge, or a grave." (p. 214) To Almayer and Lingard, it is a river of misfortune and doom which brings death to their enterprises, but to Willems it is temporary life, for by divulging its rocky passage to the Arabs he gains access to Aïssa. The river, a significant participant, becomes ". . . a voice low, discreet, and sad, like the persistent and gentle voices that speak of the past in the silence of dreams." (p. 272)

Water—as in the river or the rain—is a prominent image in the novel: water as friend or water as enemy. In that charged scene between Lingard, furious in righteous indignation, and Willems, trying hopelessly to summon up some dignity in his complete frustration, we have nature's comment in the form of a storm. It immediately seems to the fierce Lingard that "light was dying prematurely out of the world" (p. 275), and that each crash of thunder is the startled sigh of an anguished earth, the "low and angry growls" of the storm reflecting and intermingling with the angry growls of the two men. When Willems finally tries to run away, his bedraggled figure is carried back in that rush of water which "his heart was not stout enough to face." (p. 284)

But Willems persists in looking to the river for escape: "If there was any hope in the world," he thinks, "it would come from the river. . . ." Willems dreams of death "on the brilliant undulations of the straits," and his dream is correct—the river does bring violent death, but in a form he had never dreamed. His "shadowless horizons" are those of that meeting between Aïssa and his wife and himself. Almayer's revenge is fulfilled; that river which had defeated *his* hopes is also the source of frustration and finally of death to Willems.

Between the action of the river and the languor of the jungle, Willems, a "being absurd, repulsive, pathetic, and droll," is dead; Lingard—a god who had controlled destinies—is ruined; Aïssa is a mad, "doubled-up crone"; and Almayer is left, still waiting for

his fortune to be made, a broken man in a world "that's a swindle," embittered by frustration, and ready to dwindle into the Almayer who lives with his Folly as goal.⁶

These bulky background trappings are of course much in excess of Willems' "tragedy," and Conrad's attempts to suggest a tragic situation break down in the insignificance of the central character. Even the pretentious epigraph from Calderon, "Pues el delito mayor / Del Hombre es haber nacido,"⁷ is pointed at a character of greater substance than Willems. He becomes lost in the very immensity of things, a circumstance which, while it is the central point of the book, at the same time paradoxically reduces him to comparative insignificance. In writing a short story, as this novel was originally intended, Conrad would perhaps have restricted himself to more direct treatment, but after 368 pages the atmosphere becomes too charged with mysterious forebodings for its slight central character. For a study in passion, there is too much of the expedient in Willems to convey the necessary tension. His passion is off the top of his senses, touching only the froth of his emotions, and not reaching into the center of the man where real passion in conflict with reason might have been effectively dramatized in the cosmic trappings Conrad employs. Willems, like Almayer before him, seems to be crushed by the weight of the dying century, whose great burden allows him little freedom of self-expression and no chance to attain tragic stature.

IV

As representative works of the late nineteenth century, both *Almayer* and *An Outcast* show, then, only moderate movement toward a new style in the novel, preliminary steps as yet unsure of direction. Yet from the beginning, Conrad was writing like a poet, letting his images—hazy though many are—speak for him and become a part of the narrative line. Ever present, however, are the long descriptive passages and the lazy discursiveness of the language of the 1890's; ever present is the tendency to overwrite and to substitute purple passages for those sharp images which suggest, convey,

⁶The Folly is Almayer's uncompleted house whose ruins are a symbol of all his dreams come to nought.

⁷Man's greatest crime is having been born.

and become part of the novel's organic movement. Conrad's style and ideas at this time were still strongly influenced by his coevals, but, withal, the signs of a potential breakthrough are visible. In his recognition, for example, of the darks and lights of human nature and in his presentation of certain types of "under" and "have-not" characters, Conrad summed up the best of his contemporaries and presaged one direction the novel was to take after him. Nevertheless, not until *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* in 1897 was he able to manifest an individuality in style and method; though even after that, the mannerisms of his *fin de siècle* apprenticeship would still be apparent in his major novels.

A Dream of Peacocks

ERROL PRITCHARD

All night those peacocks danced, while tambourines
Struck time, gourds rattled. A minotaur in gown
And cap, Sisyphus in bangles, Saint Joan
In pearls, waltzed by. You danced there too. No-one
Spoke to me that night but you, my bell
And cap perhaps desiring, or my seal.

There was a certain pinkness to the wind,
As if my eyes were bloodshot, or the mask
I wore transparent. I could hear falling sand
On leaf and roof and hourglass. Nor did you ask
For love, but came on me like a disease,
Beat like an animal between my thighs.

All night those peacocks danced, and then decay
Settled onto the forest. Music stopped,
The dancers bowed both ways, then into gray
Silence fell. The morning reared. You dropped
Your mask to break the festival at last,
Faded like light into the morning mist.

The "Trench Poems" of Isaac Rosenberg

JACK LINDEMAN

Rosenberg I only repeat what you were saying—
the shell and the hawk every hour
are slaying men and jerboas, slaying
the mind. . . .

—*Keith Douglas*
Egypt, 1943

ON APRIL 1, 1918, Isaac Rosenberg, at the age of twenty-eight, was killed in action somewhere in France and, like many of his comrades in the British army, buried in an unmarked grave. Though a number of his poems had already appeared in magazines and three pamphlets containing his earlier work had been published at his own expense, his death carried not the same shock of tragedy for those who had their fingers on the pulse beat of English poetry during the war years as did that of either Rupert Brooke or Wilfred Owen. The sense of accomplishment in these latter two soldier-poets was indisputable, and even though both of them had died young, both had written a substantial quantity of poems displaying a definite maturity. The lesser known Rosenberg, on the other hand, was looked upon by even his strongest supporters as a "poet with promise of greatness" rather than a poet who had achieved a certain number of commanding successes. Critics generally held widely divergent opinions as to the quality of his poems. Thus his work never until recently received the attention which it deserves from discriminating poetry lovers.

An English critic, H. Coombes, in a book on Edward Thomas (an English poet and essayist also killed in World War I) refers to the unwarranted indifference shown by the public towards Thomas and states, "No poet of the century, with the exception of Isaac Rosenberg, has been so unjustifiably neglected. It seems clear that

Thomas would not have done work of the quality that Rosenberg would unquestionably have done." But Siegfried Sassoon is less qualifying and consequently more willing to put himself out on the limb in behalf of Rosenberg in his "Foreword" to *Collected Poems* (Schocken Books, New York, 1949): "I can only hope that what I say, inadequate though it may be, will help to gain for him the full recognition of his genius which has hitherto been delayed."

Ironically enough, the war which destroyed Rosenberg also provided him with those ideal incidents for which his poetic voice had been vainly searching since the day that it first became aware of its potential power. And though he had no deliberate wish to become a "war poet" it is as a war poet that he did his most effective writing. At the center of *Collected Poems* sits "Trench Poems." They form the vital core of his work; they are the Everest which he finally conquered, and it is around them that any serious discussion of his poetry must invariably begin.

Before going any further, however, a few brief facts pertaining to the poet's life might be of interest to those not already acquainted with him. He was born in Bristol, England on November 25, 1890. In 1897 his family moved to London where he started attending school. Though he began writing poetry at an early age he desired to make painting his career and later enrolled, through the generosity of several patrons, at the Slade School. He continued writing poetry, nevertheless, and received encouragement from friends, other poets, and a number of critics. In 1912 he paid out of his own pocket for the publication of a pamphlet (*Night and Day*) of his poems. This was quickly followed by two more pamphlets (*Youth*, 1915, and *Moses, A Play*, 1916) published in the same manner. In 1914 he was advised to leave England because of weak lungs. He visited a sister living in South Africa but returned to England in 1915 after which he enlisted in the army. He was sent to France the following year and on April 1, 1918 he was killed.

Isaac Rosenberg had three basic loyalties. One, as a member of the human race, was to his fellow man the world over:

Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
Your cosmopolitan sympathies.

The second was to the England in which he was born and bred and for whom he gave his life:

Water—water—O water
For one of England's dying sons.

And the third was to traditional Judaism

... from whose loins I sprung.

In the twenty pieces which go to make up "Trench Poems" we find these three loyalties fused together in perfect harmony. He sees Moses, for example, not as legislator over a small peculiar body of people known as Jews but as one who

Lit by a lamp in his blood
Ten immutable rules, a moon
For mutable lampless men.

The blonde, the bronze, the ruddy,
With the same heaving blood,
Keep tide to the moon of Moses.

But then he suddenly asks himself that perennial question which for many centuries the Jews of the Diaspora have never ceased to ask themselves, namely,

... why do they sneer at me?

Moses gave of his wisdom to mankind and mankind accepted it and has attempted to live by it ever since, but because Moses happened to be a Jew—and Mr. Rosenberg is one of his scions,

Moses, from whose loins I sprung,—

mankind has ungratefully selected his descendant brethren as a target for its spite. Perhaps this spite is in some way connected with its inability to keep abreast of the demands of the "ten immutable rules"?

After a century of virtual peace the guns began to sound once again in Europe. 1914 saw the inheritors of the Sixth Commandment, Thou shalt not kill, do deliberate violence to that commandment. The worm that "fed on the heart of Corinth, / Babylon and

Rome" was about to burrow into the heart of his beloved England.

England! famous as Helen
Is thy betrothal sung
To him the shadowless,
More amorous than Solomon.

The daughters of war "have no softer lure . . . than the savage ways of death." They are Amazons and they drive "the darkness into the flame of day. . . ."

Over our corroding faces
That must be broken—broken for evermore
So the soul can leap out
Into their huge embraces.

Isaac Rosenberg gladly offered his services to his country:

I love you, great new Titan!
Am I not you?
Napoleon and Caesar
Out of you grew.

He was well aware of the immemorial fact that "Cruel men were made immortal" by war. Still, England had no other choice, faced as she was with a rapacious enemy bent on giving the entire earth, if necessary, as a gift, to Chaos:

Chaos! that coincides with this militant purpose.
Chaos! the heart of this earnest malignancy.

The most impressive and of course the best known of the "Trench Poems" are those which glow with a more personal flame. They are glimpses into the experiences of a common soldier and yet at the same time are aimed high enough so that they surmount the mere temporal ruins of a particular time and trouble. This is not to imply, however, that they lack that touch of intimacy which arouses a feeling of empathy in the reader. Take for example "The Troop Ship":

We lie all sorts of ways
And cannot sleep.

The wet wind is so cold,
And the lurching men so careless,
That, should you drop to a doze,
Winds' fumble or men's feet
Are on your face.

Anyone who has ever had to endure the careless "lurching men" on a troop ship can vouch for the fidelity of Mr. Rosenberg's observation. But the troop ship is only the beginning of a soldier's adventures. There are more serious and trying ordeals awaiting him in France where only "The spirit" now can dream

... of cafe lights
And golden faces and soft tones. . . .

He enters that gay, happy land, once the focal point for everything that was advanced in Western culture, and finds

Heaped stones and a charred signboard show
With grass between and dead folk under, . . .

The battle is already near at hand. Soon the soldier-poet reaches the front lines and is posted as a sentry in some strategic corner of one of the trenches facing the enemy:

Somber the night is.
And though we have our lives, we know
What sinister threat lurks there.

Dragging these anxious limbs we only know
This poison-blasted track. . . .

But hark! joy—joy—strange joy.
Lo! heights of night ringing with unseen larks.
Music showering on our upturned list'ning faces.

Death could drop from the dark
As easily as song—

But death does not "drop from the dark," or not yet at least, for there is another dawn to be witnessed:

the darkness crumbles away—

a dreary awakening in the oozing mud of a trench where everything is quiet for the moment. All's bleak and cheerless in No Man's Land. As the soldier-poet gazes about him nothing seems to be alive but "the parapet's poppy" which he pulls from the earth "to stick behind" his ear, and "a queer sardonic rat" that "leaps my hand—." The rat, universally acknowledged as one of the most despicable creatures on the face of the earth, has a lesson to teach exalted Man. Like the poet, the rat has cosmopolitan sympathies, even in a time of fiercely partisan alliances.

Now you have touched this English hand
 You will do the same to a German—
 Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure
 To cross the sleeping green between.

Certainly the rat with his catholic point of view is more likely to survive the present chaos—the poet believing the rat intuitively senses this, says, "you inwardly grin as you pass"—than the young soldiers with "Strong eyes" and "fine limbs." The "haughty athletes" are doomed simply because they have not learned to touch an English hand and a German one simultaneously. "We must love one another or die" a contemporary poet has warned, and this is exactly what Mr. Rosenberg is telling us.

War has its lighter side too, or if not lighter, its discomforts which are not quite fatal. Lest we forget, our fathers fought without the aid of D.D.T.

I used to think the Devil hid
 In women's smiles and wine's carouse.
 I called him Satan, Beelzebub.
 But now I call him dirty louse.

It is easy enough for us to laugh over such matters having never been exposed to the torment which this insect is capable of inflicting.

Nudes—stark and glistening,
 Yelling in lurid glee. Grinning faces
 And raging limbs
 Whirl over the floor one fire.

For a shirt verminously busy
 Yon soldier tore from his throat, with oaths
 Godhead might shrink at, but not the lice.

* * * *

Then we all sprang up and stript
 To hunt the verminous brood.
 Soon like a demons' pantomime
 The place was raging.
 See the silhouettes agape,
 See the gibbering shadows
 Mixed with the battled arms on the wall.
 See gargantuan hooked fingers
 Pluck in supreme flesh
 To smutch supreme littleness.
 See the merry limbs in hot Highland fling. . . .

One reason I have quoted this poem at some length is that it is marvelously photographic and reproduces so authentically the scene of these suffering soldiers that one is almost tempted to reach inside his shirt and begin scratching. Also it illustrates quite effectively some of the hammer-like power which Isaac Rosenberg's poetry possesses to such a high degree: "demons' pantomime," "gibbering shadows," "gargantuan hooked fingers," "supreme littleness." And what could be more lucid than the image of "Nudes—stark and glistening, / Yelling in lurid glee," or "For a shirt verminously busy / Yon soldier tore from his throat, with oaths / Godhead might shrink at. . . ." or "Merry limbs in hot Highland fling"?

When the shells begin bursting and the bombs exploding the men quickly forget their lice, some of them, in fact, forget permanently becoming the "sprawled dead" in "the shattered track" over which the wheels of an ambulance lurch without causing them any pain:

 Their shut mouths made no moan.

Friend and foe born of man and woman are huddled together in an everlasting league of comradeship while the "shells go crying over them / From night till night and now."

Earth has waited for them
 All the time of their growth
 Fretting for their decay:
 Now she has them at last!
 In the strength of their strength
 Suspended—stopped and held.

William Butler Yeats always insisted that passive suffering was not a proper theme for poetry, and since he felt most of the poems coming out of the First World War fell into this category, he rejected them for *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1935, edited by W. B. Yeats). In his introduction to that volume he claims that "In all the great tragedies, tragedy is a joy to the man who dies." It seems quite obvious that he was thinking here in terms of the old fashion warrior-hero. What he did not realize was that even by 1914 war had become to a large extent depersonalized. The warrior was no longer heroic in so far as he no longer came into direct contact with his enemy. In modern warfare the soldier seldom if ever sees his opponent before he wounds or kills him. This does not really make him any less heroic than his armored ancestor, for his "passive suffering" is merely a different manifestation of the old heroic tradition for which Mr. Yeats (who was a non-combatant of course) nostalgically yearned. The mode of warfare had changed but Yeats' thinking had not, otherwise he would certainly have recognized not only the poetic quality of such lines as

Out of those doomed nostrils and the
 doomed mouth,
 When the swift iron burning bee
 Drained the wild honey of their youth.

but the accuracy with which they reflect the plight of the thousands of young man irredeemably caught in the mouth of that monstrous mechanized fire-breathing serpent of 20th Century warfare. Man is pathetically helpless against the hard explosive metal of the machine when confronting it on its own level. Mr. Rosenberg knew this because he had been to battle:

What of us who, flung on the shrieking pyre,
 Walk....

* * * *

The air is loud with death

against which there is no defense. The poet shouts, "Maniac Earth!" but the roar of the guns drowns his protesting voice. All there is left for him to do is to sympathize with those

Burnt black by strange decay. . . .

He imagines he hears the "weak scream" of "one not long dead" as the wheels of the truck he is riding in "grazed his dead face." Catching but a glimpse of the "face" he nudges the priest seated next to him and asks if he happened to recognize the dead soldier as someone they knew:

. . . I heard . . .

Dimly my brain

Held words and lost. . . .

Suddenly my blood ran cold. . . .

God! God! it could not be.

. . . my brother's name;

I sank—

I clutched the priest.

They did not tell me it was he

Was killed three days ago.

What are the great sceptered dooms

To us, caught

In the wild wave?

We break ourselves on them,

My brother, our hearts and years.

A new kind of heroism perhaps, but a heroism that is as genuine as any expressed by those classic examples which Mr. Yeats was referring to and over which we have pored generation after generation with deserving awe.

Poems of Attila József

INTRODUCTION AND TRANSLATIONS BY ZOLTAN L. FARKAS

MODERNISM WAS LATE in coming to Hungarian poetry. The first efforts to revitalize the art after the great poetic surge of the first quarter of the nineteenth century had waned were those exerted by Endre Ady, a poet active during the last years of the nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth centuries. Ady was an uncompromising innovator who realized, more clearly than any of his contemporaries, the desperate situation of Hungarian letters. Ady lived and wrote with passionate intensity, even in spite of the vicious criticism given him by stubbornly reactionary scholars of his day.

Ady's cause was quickly picked up by a group of young poets, Mihály Babits, Dezső Kosztolányi, Gyula Juhász, and Attila József, to name a few. Of these, Attila József seemed to fall heir to Ady's passionate and erratic temperament, as well as the older poet's capacity to attract unfavorable criticism. József's constant vehemence against both government policies and the conservative literary modes of his time made him the object of the old-guard's attack on the young generation of writers. Frequent obscurities in his verse made him not only the most persecuted, but also the most misunderstood, of these poets.

Attila József was born the son of a charwoman and a laborer in Ferencváros, Hungary in 1905. When Attila was two years old his father deserted the family; the next four years of his life were spent in an orphanage. When he was seven, he, his two sisters, and his mother moved into the Budapest slums. While still in his mid-teens, Attila received a scholarship to attend the University of Szeged. There he wrote a poem, "Innocent Song," which was published in Hungary's leading literary magazine, *Nyugat*. The revolutionary and nihilistic nature of the poem caused such a disturbance among the leading intellectuals of the time that Attila was forced to resign from the university. The poem, translated into English by Laurie

Lee in Arthur Koestler's novel, *The Invisible Writing*, literally seethes with all of the revolutionary abandon percolating through József's mind. According to Koestler, "Innocent Song" was proclaimed as a kind of manifesto by the post-war Central European generation.

József's first volume of poetry was published in 1922; his second volume appeared two years later. As a result of these two collections of verse, József acquired the patronage of Baron Lajos Hatvány, who financed a vacation for the poet in Paris. While in Paris, Attila came in contact with the then thriving Surrealists. Their influence was of secondary importance, however, to that of Freud, Marx, and Thomas Mann. The works of these three men were vital in József's development as a poet, and constituted a great influence in his later, more mature works.

The poems of Attila József can be broken down into two broad categories. The first, from 1922 to 1932, are typically loose in form and, like "Innocent Song," generally pessimistic in nature. There are notable exceptions: "Brides' Song," written in 1926, is a pure lyric piece. Other poems written in this period were escapes from the confusion of József's world and dealt with beautifully simple pastoral themes. It was during these first ten years of József's creativity that all of his Socialist Realist poetry was written. Along with his affiliation with the Hungarian Communist Party at this time, these poems were his most direct attempt to emancipate what he considered to be a populace enslaved by the Fascist government of Admiral Horthy. József's connections with the Party and with strict Socialist Realism came to an abrupt end with his expulsion from the Party for Trotskyite leanings. His criticism of the government continued, however, until his death in 1937.

From 1932 on, József became more and more plagued by periods of complete mental derangement. The many refusals which he had sustained during his youth began taking serious effect both on his naturally delicate mental equilibrium and on his poetry. His later poems abound with dark premonitions of his fate: his greater concern with death, madness, and the futility of his existence. In these later works, József adopted a more typically Hungarian form, the Magyar folk-song, which he studied and whose metres and rhymes

he learned to imitate to perfection. His poetic subject broadened to include a more subjective, introverted form of expression, with much of his symbolic vocabulary drawn from nature and an ineffable sense of the Hungarian past. These poems were the flowering of his entire career and remain as the most famous poems he had ever written. Due to his use of folk-styles, the poems appear to be light, with child-like simplicity, yet they contain the record of his mental deterioration.

In 1936, Attila József suffered his last and most severe mental collapse. The poems of 1936 and 1937 marked for József a last attempt to fathom his psychological dilemmas and finally justify himself as an individual in relation to society. The poems failed, and his feelings of impotence and persecution continued. While convalescing near Lake Balaton after his release from a Budapest mental institution in the winter of 1937, Attila József committed suicide by placing his right arm under the wheels of a slowly moving freight train.

Since his death, the reputation of Attila József has steadily grown. He is now considered in Hungary to be the greatest poet that country had produced in the period between the two world wars. The following translations are the first of József's to appear in an American periodical.

Brides' Song

Fluffy, elfish, in a circle we stand,
our shapely heads, agile limbs, fine white backs,
and our eyes—and our lips.

A dancing-bow flame we set, we bake, we cook;
and as our faces fire-up, so the softened bread,
heavy twisted, glows.

Even the wind shows itself, fondles
our wonting slender teats,
codgels our humor—billowy petticoats bouncing,
lifting.

We clean the house, wipe the pans, gather our hair in buns;
and when we walk, we sway like a rooster's comb.

We swing our fleshy hips, our arms, shimmerous rumps
like ten or twenty happy children screeching
in the dewy grass, naked, tumbling in a heap.

When our husbands return in the evening,
with tub drawn, and supper, and kisses we await them;

we tease, we play. If they return bothered and worried,
we make love to them all night long—
and watch our little bellies grow round next morning.

To Thomas Mann—A Salutation

Like a child who, wanting rest,
reaches at last his quiet bed
and asks, "Don't go away, tell me a story"—
(so that night should not yet startle him)
while his little heart in anguish beats,
does not know which he wants more,
you close by, or the story that you'll tell:
so we ask, "Sit among us and tell us a tale."
Tell us as you used to, though we still remember,
tell us that you are here among us,
and that we are all with you, all
whose finest thoughts are for mankind.
How well you know that a poet never lies,
telling only truth, none but the truth,
and the light from which he gives his light
would be dark if not for others like him.
As Hans Castorp on Madame Chauchet's body,
let us see into ourselves, here, tonight.
No noise comes with your pillowed words—
tell us all the good and all the bad,
we'll draw it in, from sorrow to desire.

Now we've buried poor Kosztolanyi,
and no more tortures of the horror-state,
like crayfish, pinch mankind;
we shudder, but we ask what will happen,
from where will fallow notions hunt us down,
is new anger seething up, sifting between us—
how long will room remain for you to read? . . .
It's a question of your speaking and our becoming strong,
let men remain as men,
women as women—free, gentile;
and all of man, because this, for one, is least . . .
So have a seat. Begin your tales.
We will listen, all just look upon you
and be glad, for today we see you here,
an European among the whites.

Childtears

My mother opens her breasts to you,—
I would be strong like mother's milk
and near your lips, weeping, flow away;
the breast is near your tiny mouth.

Why aren't the leaves my twins?
I would crawl together with you warm in winter,
and with golden sea-weeds on your head,
you'd bathe with me in my little tub.

I saw, while white shirts dried outdoors,
two little children gently lulled,
dozing proudly, their sweet mouths agape;
and the neighbors walked by in whispers.

Oh, but time seems old inside of me!
A bug on his back, shaken by grief,
my arms and legs whining gesticulate,
like a thousand rose trees in a storm.

. . . Who Is Afraid to Love

You whore, who is afraid to love,
for whom safer work is needed,
whose breasts are pushed down our necks by the infested sky,
the rim of the city's outskirts freeze—
Twisted strumpet, you light forth
your golden obligation in the sun:
the child begs to be loved,
but it can't be helped, I must destroy him.
I'm a young man, noble and stubborn;
I have no solace, and remorse is no virtue;
just suffering, like one pressed
between diggings in the earth, I complain—
strumpet!—Why should my words stab you!
Solemnity looks well on you;
you are strong and worth while as a woman;
and your knock-knees have won renown—
I have not spoken words in vain,
neither has pain hunted you in vain.
The prints of a young man's eyes
have faltered from my face, and I become pale.
My people listen to my work
like empty benches a mad professor.
Can't you feel what dangers light-up
you, me, my life, and how I long for it:
how I long for you if I'm not with another
and if I'm no place else, how the death-bed will do?
Put the latch of this shut world into my hands,
a tear's begun—wait without for freedom.
My deadmen, who are arriving to congregate, wave them away;
speak, and flatter them in circles with your soft words.
You recognize me, who has breathlessly worn out your eyes,
so that you would not love me—beloved!
Once a scrub crawled up from the sea—
let him reach your eternal lap!

Two Verses

For K. S. — Dead, TB

I wept for him—tears are free—
my best, and lame companion.

There were few enough kisses on his head:
he was an apprentice shoemaker, and a rebel.

He worked a lot, he listened as much;
and when he maddened, he marked his time—

Now he'll make no more shoes,
although he has found his beloved.

A Revolutionary, body and soul,
decorated: deserving a 12-gun salute.

Three Blacksmiths

three huge blacksmiths
stop by the grave of the dead—

One bellows a fire,
that the deadman should not cool.

The other, fiery, heavy boned
makes a halo from a barrel-hoop,—

The third in his apron,
hammers a glowing child.

Stacking Wood

The depot bridge still shudders,
the fragile fall-wind purrs,
and the dried-up logs of wood thunder
as they're thrown from the cart.

If the sky turns, the withered pile
dumbs . . . What bothers you? I think I'm afraid;
I would escape, a log on my shoulder.
The little boy I was still lives.

The little whelp still lives,
and the grown up chokes with regret,
but he does not weep, just sings little songs
and watches out that his hat isn't blown away.

Was I afraid of you hard men?
you wooden boxes, did I marvel at you?
Now, like a stolen log, I'll carry you
homeless ones through this heavily guarded world.

Julius Juhasz Is Dead

The telephone rings, the news
of your suicide hurts,
that you lay stubbornly in a bed.
Even among the madmen your heart
couldn't bear such fate, there's
no reason why this earth's imagined
pain should not hurt—look
how quietly it opens the grave.

Now what should I say? that you burn?
that fantasies killed you long ago?
Your whiskers and hair still grow.

We'll recite all of your poems.
They're washing you now. Your mother weeps,
and your friend writes an epitaph.

Hopelessly

Slowly, with reflection

When all is done, man is dusty sadness,
reaching to the rain soaked plains,
looking around pondering, wise,
nodding his head, hopelessly.

I try to survey, freely,
look at all without pretence.
Every silvery axe-bit slash
plays on summertree leaves.

My heart is sitting on a nothing branch,
its little body silently shivers,
around it clot the timid stars,
watching—watching.

In the steel-colored firmament

In the steel-colored firmament turns
the cool and lacquered dynamo.
Oh, quiet constellations!
between my teeth shoot words like sparks—

Within me melts the past, like a stone
silently falling free through the void.
Enough of this mute, blue weather!
The sabre blade glimmers: my hair—

My pains smear like a juicy worm
evaporated across my mouth
My heart is heavy, my words get chill.
But then, to whom would I speak?

Like On An Open Field

Like on an open field, if a little boy
has been caught by a storm,
and he has no mother, no home to which to flee
with grasping, scratching feet;
the thick and furious sky thunders;
stalks of straw spin on the stubble,
and he, like an animal, whimpers—
He would sob, but fear
has taken the warmth from his tears;
he would sigh, but suddenly
he realizes the freezing sky.
Just then, when the trembling,
pale lightning shines
on his thin frame and face
like the flash and black rain-pour slicing—
as if gushing from itself,
like immeasurably vast crying,
bleating-up from the earth,
dripping dull on the green trees,
filling-up trenches, digging pot-holes,
surging on the meadow, surging through the veins,
billowing high in the air—
the child steps into the distance;
he's found his path through the storm.
So did desire break over me, so full of fury,
so sudden, so violent,
that in my early years I began to cry.
And these tears soaked into the ground
where men heavily lift their feet
who would run—
now I stop. I'd ignore all of my desire
if they would just love me.

Regret

So I've come out to this forest.
Soft fluttering,—the leaves rustle
like handbills. The earth's silence
heavily reclines. The branches, arms reach out:
All is strong! . . . Dry twigs fall
on my leafy hair. Dry branches fall.
For just one moment did I stay, just one.
Roar, my comrade forest! I nearly creak.
I was there hardly a minute, just then
that maddened beast charged straight at me,
and I fled to collect my strength,
like a little old lady her boughs and regrets.
Teardrop,—an ant drank from it,
meditated upon his face within,
and now can't work because of it.

Chrysanthemums

CHAO TZE-CHIANG

The bleak, bleak wind
Chills hedgerows.
In my garden
Chrysanthemums
Scorning the frost
Cling to fragrance and elegance.
Now late autumn is gone.
They alone do not fall.

Seven Poems by Gene Baro

At the Mirror

The picture that was once her face
sinks in another line to trace
and shape the flesh upon the bone:
she sets its gaze into her own.

To reach beyond those waiting eyes,
to learn wherein the mirror lies,
the image must return to keep
the promise of a gaze too deep.

Behind her was a cowrie shell
and green plants, on the window sill,
a new shoot growing green and high,
the window cold with winter sky.

The Turtle

The turtle plants her eggs in sorrow;
almost in sorrow, it seems, the weighted
shape lumbers from the moonlit sea;
from the thin silver of tossing waters,
she carries darkness to a sand hollow,
body to body, the slow ore of birth,

Some antique suffering transfigures
the sea; some darkness hollows the eggs
with memory. Down the ponderous
stirrings of her track, the turtle seaward
moves, returning the sand in measures
of silvering light, of the waves' churning.

No answer sings in the high sea wind,
but brute life made beautiful, sorrowful,
as the turtle superbly moves
and moves the world in a shell, the echo
and shell of the sea. Such is the sea wind
it cries and sings an endless harmony.

The turtle casts a gibbous shadow,
like the moon's; the waves roll endless to the shore;
real as human misery,
grief sings endless from the dark-brooding sea,
the mothering sea in ponderous sorrow,
to whom nothing is lost of many burdens.

Vigil

Across a country mile
of tender fields downhill,
the town relights its lamps
as evening swings the stars,
and all the twilight spills
its roses into dark.

The sudden dusky spring,
the tumbled rose, the green
of valley and of sky,
into that dark descends,
and winter that has been
hangs with the moon on high.

The March moon rides late; late,
too, was that winter sleep
when the moonless night came down
over the frozen stubble fields,
where no man climbed to keep
a watch of the sleeping town.

Eve Again

An apple, golden-red and warm,
you must not taste, you must not touch.
Knowledge lay heavy in her palm—
an apple, and she yearned for such.

Now, heavy harvests of that tree
September's winds have knocked about.
Plenty of apples, but not she
to find them with a happy shout.

The Relic

Tap this skeleton: these bones
will ring like Venice glass,
for these are bones of a saint;
this is the skull of reason
cleft by unreason's holy
light, the oracle of fire.

But these, you say, are only
calcined bones swept from the cliff
and scattered on the rubbish
heap of a high ancient town.
In the valley, the sweet birds
always have sung litanies.

In the valley, the stream chants
and always has chanted thus
over the pure brook stones. Straight,
the cedars have sprung in this
windless place. There is too much
peace, perhaps—merely this peace.

These bones are indifferent
to the scene: now hear them ring!

they speak out in fiery
argument. They are great bells
of the heart, if you will hear them,
not stop your ears with your fists.

Tall Forest Trees

In tongues of fire and fiery leaves,
tower upon tower, the forest trees
raise their extremest crowns upon the light.

Upon the light, the sun is raised, the flames
circling the sun, the radial images
and pinions of wind, violent arrows.

The great globes of trees are spun upon wind;
higher than wind, the feathery light shakes
out gold leaves, green birds, unequal distances.

Trees are a metaphor of wind and leaves.
Whole shivering distances between branch
and branch cage air and eye suddenly.

Still, turn in slow shadows of the tree crowns
that are like slow giant ferns that bend, drop
the silent thick seed of the forest floor.

Trees are a metaphor of wind and leaves:
the sun bursts the stark wind-bearing branches
where, like fruit, will hang the perilous moon.

In the Bone

Then, an old woman going to rest
knew her beauty once was best,
knew she was once loveliest.

Even spoiled mirrors returned the trace

to her of some enduring grace
that flickered from her ravaged face.

The ruined head the bronze had shown
gave yet what she had truly known,
beneath was also beauty, in the bone.

Believe! Who knew so well as she
the burning city and the endless sea,
the burning city and the endless sea?

Tidal Pool

MILDRED COUSENS

Come see what chance has done,
or else a wizard moon
urging the summer tide.
Come now before the sun
reaches the height of noon
and this rock pool has dried.

Here are seaweed strands,
each pod an amber bead;
Irish moss in fronds
of white translucent jade;
amethystine mussels,
a tiny crab of coral,
scattered barnacles
as hard as beryl,
and a silver sand dollar
embossed with a star.

This wide granite fissure
holds a small treasure
along with the salt
within its open vault—
It seems like more than chance
or lunar extravagance.

The Heron

MILDRED COUSENS

The reeds bend and sway
in the wind his wide wings make
climbing the pale blue stair,
for he has heard the harsh
drone and loud shriek
high over the marsh,
and seen the metal creature
trailing a wanton feather
through Arctic wastes of air.
He must be wary of the hawk head,
the taut body of livid aluminum,
strange step-child of nature,
a grim species come
invading his continent.

All flesh and blood so vulnerable
in your slow ascent,
the long curve upward into light,
here is a ruthless rival.
O sensitive cell and delicate nerve,
what a monstrous plight,
that you should live in fear
for your survival.

Poems by Richard Weisenseel

The Three Birds

The three birds flew high
On the blue hill against the sky's
Margin of sprawling fire;
I watched the one spire
Above sight of bird or cloud,
Higher than the low sun allowed
The eye to go, oh, so much higher
I did not laugh to show
The smile that troubled my dark features
Because among all things that grow
I lost a bird out of my daytime creatures.
But then, more terrible, in sudden fall,
My vision caught those two I did not call
To mind, for suddenly
They turned and turn to fly,
Their crisp wings' rustling fills the sky,
As they return to me.

Toss Up

Artisans all, generations of winds
Rosette the cliffs that, unfeeling, stand
In massive slouch crumbling downstrand
Littered with fish with wind-baked fins.

A lady walks here hearing the bells
Of one mile buoys crisp on March air,
Steps aloof where the sand is bare
Of outspoken death—where only shells

Mark minute question-marks—and gapes
Along the curving alignment of surf
Wind-altered briefly. Stooping to earth,
She spies in gleaming nacre human shapes.

Now she will wonder who sees the dead
Live in lineaments drawn of her face
Whose crackled cheek-bones abase
The grinning child on the ocean bed?

For Times Square: A Villanelle

Under the blinking signpost God Times Square,
shimmying fuzzy caterpillars night
wove golden monsters bristling concrete air,
glaring like popcorn shuttling subway stairs,
Death ground in pieces, Death in dazzling light,
under the blinking signpost God Times Square . . .

Hushing a million eyeglass-frozen prayers
muffled by cigarettes' choked anthracite,
wove golden monsters bristling concrete air,
cyclopean towers flickered clock-eyed glare
to blind the winnowing flocks' encircling flight
under the blinking signpost God Times Square.

Silken and swift things lit in fiery hair
run into darkness wondering what Might
wove golden monsters bristling concrete air
where only men triangles of despair
raised girder on meteor on clotted sight,
wove golden monsters bristling concrete air
under the blinking signpost God Times Square.

In Soft Tones

So much sings, birds, leaves
hurled down in currents of wind,
flakes falling of melting snow,
martyring saints on pavement below
huddling in scarf and trench-coat,
the pouting child, old men who sinned
against books of ancient words, boats
cutting waves of unloving seas.
I lie awake loving, disturbed by these.

Among Them

Among them, Schwartz,
 though scarcely least in darkness,
crouched, head forward, sloped into great nose,
delineating thought as bony as the chords of violins
that volleyed round the contour of his chin, un-
 buttoned smile
and hand-carved mortars where his ears held sound . . .
he did not pay attention to his knees.

Among them, Schwartz,
and Michael Ibn Edikt,
wrapt in Ravels soft as his lady's lap
that sprouted fox-tails when the sun was hot,
noticed that dark of manlike sharpness, like
a field that autumn breezes often crease
unfolding colors hid in summer wheat
(colors he knew and never could explain),
and there the woman of his eyes perceived
God's mother thriving on a satyr's grin.

A Reminder of Arrested Flights

*(an exhortation to a Mormon poet obliged
yet to pioneer: Richard L. Pope)*

Cecil B. DeMille?

Perhaps. Not necessarily, however . . .

Not at all, in fact.

These

among desert sprawls glistened tiredly,
their women neither buckskin hags with bows
propped effectively, nor,

with milk-browed,

pink-splashed faces, for

effect of

Ah! and Oh! against some awe-spread screen,
they trekked, those Mormons,
across half-hells of weeds and ice-stilled
jaws in stone against the timeless whoopings
of Indian breeze,

carrying

Nauvoo's wheat, Palmyra's fever, Moses' cold belief
brighter, more sun-stained than the sand
reflecting Joseph's ochreous eye

(maniac seer of Baptist John and John Divine)—

mammoth cattle dead

beneath night's horns

like herds of locusts stiff in zero noon—

trekked Iowa, Kansas, lands of crust and bush,

black slopes, gull-less, into the tree-

less valley where

the reptile-shimmering, white-banked ancient lake—

defying death in heaviness of death—

wrung Brigham wild

(Salt of God's pity!

This the holy place!).

And all of this,

no choked-up rhapsody of film,
but clear-
shaped, like that lake, yet
out of stone, no, sand, must erected be
taller than gull's flight like the temple there
your poem, fixed above all birds,
in the crossed shapes of their bones.

The Catch

Flat and crisp now
that wet exuberance
of late summer wind
flaps on stiff bough,
a great fish strung high
for trophy or prize
till the long rainfall
when it swims the sky.

Poems by John N. Morris

Two Armies

This couple, as two armies move
Upon a repetitious plain,
Go armed with all their knowledge of
Each other's faults. They wage a vain
Slow battle wearing out their lives
Opposed across the strict frontiers.
Not even enmity survives
The cold attrition of the years.

Closing Up

Reluctantly, they blind
The windows, turn stiff locks,
And only leave behind
The last hours of the clocks.

At last, each entry closed,
An early dark descends
On two who had supposed
That summer never ends.

They were the last to go,
But had no wish to stop
To watch the solemn snow
Rise to their tall rooftop.

Orpah

(Ruth I: 14)

When Orpah turned, she turned alone.
She stepped from history.
The chronicles are silent on
This quiet mystery.

She found her house untenanted.
She stocked one narrow shelf.
But deep in her cold marriage bed
She woke beside herself.

She took no Boaz to reward
Approved fidelity.
A knife instead stood iron guard
Upon her constancy.

What comfort was there to restrain
That solitary hand?
While Orpah lived she died, alone
In love's familiar land.

Another Country

When I could be amazed, I woke
To watch the moving of the moon.
I wondered at the morning's march
That drew my shadow down to noon.

When I was hungry, I was fed.
From the sweet waters I drank deep.
Upon green miracles of grass
I dreamed the parables of sheep.

Between me and those secret fields
Remembered, barrier mountains shine.
No Moses can divide the seas
That keep me from my Palestine.

True distances are miles of time.
Since no decay permits repair,
The aspirations of the heart
Are its profession of despair.

Poems by Konstantinos Lardos

Sputnik I

Prologue

I,
Daedalus,
I made
Dumb statues open wide their eyes;
Their loins to move.

I,
Daedalus,
I held the secret bull a captive
In the confines
Of my stony maze.

Soon,
Soaring gulls
Will tell the
Frightened Minos we escape;
I, and my son.

I,
Daedalus,
No greater man exists.

Birth

In my beginning,
On my first day, screaming,
She plucked me from her womb
And died forever there
Unknown to me.

Imprisoned
In this new and greater womb
Created by my father here in Cnossus
For the Cretan king,
I hear her screaming now.

Preparing for new birth,
Not steeped in blood
But bowed by
Bees' wax and
By eagles' wings;

Poised
Now for flight;
I fly.

Flight

Stretch wide your winged arms
O fledgling son,
Escaping labyrinthine terrors
of the fiery
Bull.

Outstretch your arms;
Sting heaven with their flutter.
See how
The ploughman gapes,
The shepherd breaks his staff in disbelief.

Soar greatly upward.
Near me. Beyond.
Beyond the gulls.
Swiftly,
Flashing in flame, surpass me, princely son;

Astound
The world
By your rising.

Descent

Sun
Burns.
Soft wax
Flows to my armpits
From my arms.

O
Father, father,
See, I burn, I burn;
I followed you.
Where is she now to pluck me from this air,
To grasp my flailing arms,
To fling me back into the universe
As once she
Tore me
From her womb?
Overwhelm me,
Mother,
By your clasping.

Interment

I cannot,
I cannot watch
Where you are falling:
The sea engulfs,
The land embraces you.
O Gods,
Retain an
Image of his
Greatness
On those island rocks.
O Icarus,
O falling star,

O comet,
Brighter than any sun
Has ever known,

Amaze
The world
By your falling.

Epilogue

I,
Daedalus,
I made
Dumb statues open wide their eyes,
Their loins to move.

I,
Daedalus,
I gave them life.
Move, my son,
Now.

Oh,
Had you had
Your father's love
Might you have
Lived.

I, Daedalus,
I had the world,
And lost it.

Wanting

After great feasting,
After much dancing
And displays of love
Comes quick the hour of return.

A peasant girl
Allays our fearful journey
By her songs.

Our new-found cousins
In young awareness
Of their manhood—
Their great pride,

Lead us,
The worldly, bitter lords,
Past the ancestral paths,
Along ancestral slabs
Which constitute the island roads.

Now, through our veins,
Flow night,
Dark Samian wine.

Our feet must stumble
On the paths, as we go,
Arm in arm, to home.

We two, reigning alone,
Sucking cold air,
Revive;
Can slowly mount,
Can count the steps.

Once more,
In glowing tower
Of the ancestral home,
We are the bridegroom and the bride.

And now, before the window,
Beside the wooden couch,
Below the fern-encrusted icon,

Our lamp
Burns waiting, low;
Our love
Burns bright and wanting.

Poems by Karl Patten

Directive

Only go back, go back,
Tough survivor of the wreck
Of your first existence,
Piously seek the ruins
And place your iron wreath
On the spot marked X. Beneath
Lie toys, blue building blocks,
Wind-up trains, overheard talks
Not meant for you, the stairs
You fell down, the silvered hearse
That stopped, panted, drove off,
The maid with mustache and rough
Hands, the fight you never could
Win and never understood,
The giant parents whose whim
Was law, whose every slam
Of a door foretold trouble.
Can you construct from rubble
Like this the future you live
Now and in the past? Your love
Of self says that you must
Find in broken glasses, rust,
And ashes the shape of all
That's gone and is and will
Be, so only go back
To your junk-heap, go back.

Nikolai Kusmitch

"Only in course of time an exaggerated admiration had developed in him for those who . . . could go about and bear the motion of the earth."

Rilke, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*

Doomed at first by the towering wind of time
That, second by second, groaned like a glacier
About his tepid body, fixed its rime
On every mortal pore, he begged the grocer

To send food to his room. He'd lost the skill
Of standing upright in the reeling street,
Tilting on its axis, could barely scale
His topsy-turvy floor, had to retreat

To bed on rough days. Was it some sad fraud
That unwound motion in his eye, made him suffer
From bloated love of common men whose pride
Ignored nausea? Or did he decipher

Solidity's code, solidarity's quasi-
Solution? If so, he formed no sweet myth
Of self and time, of self and thing, but, crazy
With wisdom, plaited his frail rope of faith

By chanting Pushkin, and, under the covers,
Foresaw the swift final breath of time harden—
Always marvelling at the daring lovers
Who hung on gaily in the public garden.

The Stump in the Woods

Were I to kick it, it would burst.
It sits there, drained, askew, silvery
Gray, a very Lear of stumps,
Patches of lichen on its shape,

The wedges of deterioration
Bigger every year and smoother
On the curve but edged with splinters,
Its mossy finger-roots distraised,
Never to clutch again, arthritic,
Sprung and arched by rivulets
Of rain. Probably a woodchuck
Has holed and nested underneath,
Certainly termites have colonized
A channelled village in its punk,
Chewed flaky wormwood in its core.

Hurricane, lightning, saw, or age,
Element, avarice, or will,
What matters what condemned the tree?
It is a presence in the woods,
The local genius of its clearing,
Greater to me than all that wildly
Challenge to obscure its heap—
The throttling vine and florid bush,
Or even principle of change.
It sparkles in the inner eye:
A remnant of a northeast height,
Some half-forgotten god in exile.

The Toad

"Anatomy is destiny"—Freud.

This knobbly beast, the vile
Bombinator, muck-brown,
The goggley squatter at Eve's
Ear, he thinks to vanish,
A stone, perhaps, in dirt,
While I approach him slowly.
See him, with knees erect

And throbbing throat ballooning
Out to twice his hat-size,
Who, now cupped in hand, plays
Foully his single weapon
And fills me with—disgust
And ancient fear of warts.

He takes the leave I quickly
Give him. Old clown of leather,
A rattling agate-bag,
Bufo vulgaris capers
Across the path, and all
The world's his paradise.
Can I detest his bearing
When his quiddity's glimpsed?
A fellow of importance,
Though lacking stature, never
Was he an alien for his crime,
Whose wrinkled crown secretes
The magic jewel, the ruby.

Socrates

Remembering Xantippe and the chamber-pot,
No doubt foreseeing the hemlock and the mob,
He left the young men to his logic and their puzzlement.

As always, the hairs of his inner ear
Were tight to hear the daimon's vote,
Silence or negation, so now, alone for once, how rare

These days, he rested from his buzzing and
Biting, visited his stable and his wagon,
A stranger, of course, to war and racing and never shown in parades.

The blood beat in his horses' thighs,
Their teeth snapped; the car was simple,
A conveyance, its function following the form of things.

No carrot, no sugar, instead he measured
The harness of proportion, cast it over
The sulking heads, and reined them to the nimble will.
Then, legs apart and properly balanced,
The bald and bearded charioteer
Managed wrath's stallions through Attic streets and squares,
Wittily turned an infrequent corner,
And banqueted that night among the spheres.

A Sleeping Beauty

CHAD WALSH

The moment they decided was not certain
Then or ever. Perhaps, she later knew,
It was as early as the second forking
Beyond the derelict school where she followed
As he turned off into the road that led
Past a flecking farmhouse, faded to twin ruts,
And shortly merged into a slope of grass.

She felt the blades of grass, not singly, touch
Her ankles and vaguely higher as they walked
In silence. At the summit of the low hill
The great arms of an oak darkened his face.
Standing beneath it she could hear his breathing,
Quick and uneven. He did not try to touch her.
He had not spoken since before the schoolhouse.

She did not ask him why he kept this silence.
Perhaps this was her moment of decision,
Although she did not know it when they started,
Side close to side, but sides and hands apart,
Down the far slope where at the end she saw
A rounded woodland darker than the sky,
And at its edge a thin, bright stream to cross.

He took her hand to help her leap across.
The soft sod caught and kept the mold of her heels.
He set her hand free, and he led the way
Into the mottled darkness of the woods,
Bending the branches of the lower bushes
To ease her path, then leading on again
To find the trail into the heart of darkness.

When they arrived there, there they stood a while
Under an oak tree notched with growing leaves,
A tree so vast of reach no bushes grew;
And there they sat on the forsaken leaves
Of other years, while some short words of love,
Halting and widely spaced, came to her ears
More as ritual than as coherent speech.

She felt his careful arm around her shoulder.
She leaned a little closer to his strength.
The moon broke past a nest of fugitive clouds.
A far light filtered through the half-full leaves
And flecked the dead leaves lying all about them.
He drew her closer and his cautious hand
Hovered and closed upon her little breast.

Perhaps this was the moment of decision.
A word, a gesture then would have prevailed
To check the race of history and reverse it.
The moment passed, it was the final moment.
What followed, followed quickly as she felt
The full length of the dead leaves rising to her
And saw his head between her and the oak tree.

A little pain, a little slower pleasure,
Vaguely insistent, kept rhythm with his breathing.
She watched the vagrant moon pass overhead,
Fringed now and then by hints of greening leaves,
At times denied by the oak tree's massive arms.
His face was like a share of night above her,
His hair stirred like new leaves against her cheek.

She did not know how long it ought to last.
The chill wind of the deepening night came creeping
Along the dead leaves of their solitude.
Her arms reached tighter for his hovering warmth.
A tentative epiphany grew brighter
And briefly radiated from its center.
Her closed eyes made an end to other worlds.
Out of the woods and up the hill and down,
And down the rutted road and past the farmhouse
Where darkened windows stared with blinded eyes;
And past the broken swings of the old schoolhouse,
And on the main road that must take them back.
They talked of everything except the night.
His homing kiss burned mildly on her lips.

She went to bed. Sleep kept its tryst on schedule
As surely as another tryst was kept,
And at the instant of the new surrender
Belated brightness surged from nowhere; somewhere
A steadier invasion found its beachhead.
The occupying glory camped with sleep.
The sleeping beauty of the senses woke.

Poems by Helen Carlson

Elegy

If our voices run dry when teakettles whistle in moonlight,
And if there is nothing to say in a torrent of whispers
And gurgling friendships and packaged jukebox memories;
If the evening stains our hands and we grow weary
Of doughnuts, laughter, and the savage prayers
That caress our steps through vagabond streets and doorways,
Then only say the days grow old with you,
That you know that I, a Prospero of ghosts,
Have sealed a tear of the sea and a grain of wind
In the walls of my room where history burns to life.
Say that you dare to cross a chasmal threshold
To see the hearth where I conjured musical flames,
And say that you saw the world in my eyes
And pitied my hands when they bled from the heat of the sun.
Say only that you've crammed your memories into your pockets,
And the grins of the damned will curl dead in haunted arcades.

Sleep

Just for those evenings when sleep is over the stairway,
Over the tired porch and ten-watt hall,
When the day's last steps by eaves and moon-blackened windows
Turn to the patched and breezing lawn,
When smoky fingers finally cease
To curl around the broken chimes
Of East and West and clotted earth,
Just for those evenings the days are born.

And up that stairway with the dew of empty grass
About my feet, and the grief of labor
Alone between the days,

And now a bowed and urgent patient for sleep,
Grateful at last to blanket the dove-shaped leech
And hide my raw palms in the pillowed dark,
I slip by the fractured walls and brush
The shadows from my bed.

Conversations

I enjoyed the conversations every midnight,
When the books were asleep in their shelves and we in the spell
Of buttered toast and paper voyages,
Or over the summits of gaslit movie trances
Or the many lives we bought and slept to death,
Heard phantom Future tap at the window panes.

Even as we roamed from words to smiles,
Privately breathing all the while
And pouring invisible memories into the walls,
I especially watched your fingers and fancied
Your will was there, unmoving but vitally lithe—
More than the seasons we've known or the immigrant turnings
That billowed into our separate histories—
But I lacked the glance of an evening star in my eyes
To burn away the dust of fallen sleep
Or the jealous phantom of all your unborn years.

And so I entertained your lively figments
And even offered labor for their birth;
And you so unruffled in the throne of my heart,
Under the make-believe moon on the ceiling
And your curtained horizon, venetian and fragile,
You fed me the evenings in the ancient sleep of the world.

Daily Bread¹

Translated from the Latin by the author.

JOSEPH TUSIANI

The hour which we called best, O the sweet hour,
Is dead with all its music and its light.

Now farewell, my time of peace,
Tender song of man, farewell.

Let now the little ant through furrows go
For the grasshopper has been killed by the sun.
To all mortals soon shall winter
Bring with rain and snow all evils.

No difference between the viscid worm
And man's existence. Unaware, my foot
Has just crushed a worm; and I
Am in turn crushed by the gods.

The hour which we called best, O the sweet hour,
Is dead with all its music and its light.

Now farewell, my time of peace,
Tender song of man, farewell.

¹PANIS QUOTIDIANUS

Murmure plena, candida periit
Hora quam nos vocavimus optimam.
Nunc vale, dulcedinis hora,
Suavis humana musica, vale.

Sole cicada transfixa fulgido,
Cibum per sulcos trahat formicula.
Asperimus imbrifer annus
Multa mortalibus mala feret.

Nihilo differt a verme viscido
Hominis vita. Vermis inconscio
Comprimitur pede, ego necor
Superna voluntate deorum.

Murmure plena, candida periit
Hora quam nos vocavimus optimam.
Nunc vale, dulcedinis hora,
Suavis humana musica, vale.

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Editorial Notes

(continued from inside front cover)

that Periclean Athens, ancient and renaissance Rome, later Paris and London—all workshops of great writers—have been literary capitals. New York is a literary capital only in a commercial sense. Most of the publishers are there, so are most of the agency boys and girls, so are the most lavish, most crowded literary shindigs. But its writers—where are they? We cling to the old-fashioned thought that writers make literary capitals—not publishers, not public relations counsellors, not literary conclaves, not even cultural cocktail parties.

Conrad Aiken writes: "May I point out that the poem 'To the Moon,' by Cavafy, on page 388 of your current number [Spring 1959], is obviously a translation? The original was Shelley's 'Art thou pale for weariness,' and it is interesting to see how closely the meaning has been kept, despite the double journey, but with what a total loss of Shelley's magic."

Rae Dalven explains: "Michael Peridi, rated by Athenian poets as one of Cavafy's most authoritative biographers, states in his *Life and Works of Cavafy* (p. 147) that Cavafy's 'To the Moon' is an adaptation of Shelley's poem, and he adds that it contains Cavafy's 'coldest and most inept verses.' I agree with Peridi—and also with Mr. Aiken when he says that it lacks 'Shelley's magic.' But since Peridi labeled the poem an *adaptation* and not a translation, I felt it should be included in my collection of Cavafy's heretofore untranslated poetry of his youthful years. I should have noted, however, that it was adapted from Shelley's poem as Peridi did.

"May I add that there are two printed versions of 'A Love,' which is also included in the Spring *Literary Review*. The one printed in *Ta Nea Grammata* (1936) mentions that 'A Love' was influenced by a ballad entitled "Auld Robin Pray," written by Miss A. Barnard. I have not been able to locate this ballad. The version I used in my translation is taken from Peridi's biography.

"'To the Moon' and 'A Love' are the only two Cavafy poems I know which are not wholly original. I do not consider either of them among Cavafy's best work, but they are of historical interest. Obviously, Cavafy was a much greater *original* poet than an adapter. This, I think, is what is of the greatest concern to lovers of poetry."

Gil Orlovitz, whose full-length play, *Gray*, was published in its entirety in this *Review* (Winter 1958-1959), along with a group of his poems and an autobiographical sketch, has been invited by the Library of Congress to record the whole of *Gray* and a representative selection of his poetry. We salute the Library and congratulate the listening public, since Mr. Orlovitz, unlike too many poets, is a reader as well as a writer of distinction.

"The Review is making something of a stir," the Albany, Oregon, *Democrat Herald*, recently remarked. The *Los Angeles Times* writes: "The Literary Review . . . has devoted its pages to Robert Hillyer, Waldo Frank and Padraic Colum, and to those unaware or forgetful of their work, these pages are a delight and a revelation."

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